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FATE.

By the Author of "Nickleboy's Christmas-Box,"
"Maurice Durant," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXVII.

One master passion in the breast,
Like Aaron's serpent, swallows up the rest.

Pope.

WITHOUT a word Miss Lucas glided into the room, closed the door, and noiselessly took up her position by a chair.

Lady Melville, who had never removed her eyes from her face, sank into the chair before the toilet glass, and regarded her for a few moments in silence; then, in a cold, searching tone, she said: "You wished to speak to me?"

Miss Lucas drooped her eyelids.

Lady Melville understood it as an affirmative, and waved her white, gem-studded hand at the chair.

"Sit down."

Miss Lucas sat down and clasped her hands in her lap.

There was something so indicative of the resolute, stealthy, snake-like woman herself in the gesture that the harassed woman of the world shuddered.

The shudder was not lost upon the other, and a cold, shadowy smile flitted over the steely eyes.

"Yes," she commenced, in her low, monotonous voice, "I heard your ladyship walking to and fro, and feared you were ill. I have heard you for several nights."

"You heard me walking the room," repeated her ladyship, fixing her dark eyes upon her. "Doubtless you also saw me?" and she glanced towards the keyhole.

"Doubtless, my lady," was the cool reply.

Lady Melville displayed no surprise, though she may have felt any degree of it.

"Woman," she said, "I thought you were a spy."

"Your ladyship is too keen an observer of human nature to have erred in your conclusions," was the quiet reply. "I am a spy, if a curious mind deserves so harsh a name."

"You have seen me walking the room; pray what

[MR. BESANT'S MISGIVINGS.]

else have you seen?" asked Lady Melville, removing her gaze for the first time, and looking dreamily in the glass.

"More, perhaps, than your ladyship would imagine," replied Miss Lucas.

Lady Melville started the slightest in the world, and turned in her chair to confront her.

There was less composure in her face now, and a tinge of alarm.

"You speak boldly, you behave with cool calculation; you know, or you fancy you know something that will compel me to submit to your impertinence? Is it not so?"

The governess inclined her head.

"It is, my lady."

"You are candid," said Lady Melville, frowning darkly. "A word of warning: Do not presume too much. I may discover ere long that you have founded your pretensions to my consideration on insufficient grounds. If I do, think not that I shall spare you! I say 'beware!'"

"And I say, also, 'beware!' my lady," retorted Miss Lucas, if reply so quietly and monotonously spoken could be called a retort.

"Good! Having warned each other," said Lady Melville, coldly, "and bearing in mind that warning, let us proceed. Tell me in a few words what you want of me—but, first, I caution you, I am not rich. The money I have is absorbed."

"I know it," was the quiet interruption. "I do not come to ask money. I am not so unwise. Surely it would be a waste of time, for your ladyship has already an outlet which drains your pockets dry."

Lady Melville turned upon her quickly.

"Is that all you know?" she said, with bitter scorn. "Woman, go to your rest; you can make no market of such a poor commodity. The shame, if shame there be any, lies with the man who robs me, not with me who am robbed."

Miss Lucas shook her head slowly.

"Your ladyship is hasty. I know more than that. Lord Harcourt's white hands are always outstretched for hush money. I know what it is you pay him to hide."

"It is false!" breathed the beautiful woman, thrown off her guard, her white hands clenching at her side, and her lips tightly compressed as if with some inward agony.

"No, it is true," said Miss Lucas, smoothing her gray dress with calm fingers.

Her ladyship could almost fancy that they were smoothing out the whole secret of her life.

She turned her head away for a moment and covered her eyes with her hands. When she removed them it was to see, with a start, that the noiseless woman was standing over her.

She shrank with a gesture of fear.

Once more came the quiet smile of power.

"Your ladyship's maid has done your hair badly to-night. Allow me to brush it properly. I am deft and quick and will not hurt you."

Lady Melville leant back in the chair and threw back her hair, and Miss Lucas commenced her task.

Lady Melville could see the expressionless face above her reflected in the glass. She kept her eyes upon it.

"You have not told me what you wanted of me," she said, after a few moments spent in regaining her composure and striving to think of some escape from the cold, gray, merciless woman, "what is it?"

"As yet nothing," was the reply. "On the contrary, I came to offer my services to your ladyship."

Lady Melville's lip curled with inexpressible scorn. "You speak falsely now at least," she said. "Tell me how dearly I must pay for those services."

"Your ladyship is quite right to distrust me," was the reply. "I did not profess disinterestedness. I said 'Not yet.' In time I may. At present I want nothing. I am ready to work without wage."

"How can you help me, supposing I have need of help?"

"Your ladyship shall determine for yourself. I am a spy! You see I have no false delicacy. In your ladyship's service I use it without malice. I may have learnt something that might serve you—nay, I have learnt it."

Her ladyship thought for a moment.

"To whom does it relate?" she asked, in the same cold tone.

"To three persons," was the reply.
 "And first?"
 "To Lillian Melville."
 Her ladyship's eyes dropped.
 "What other?" she asked, huskily; then, suddenly raising her eyes to the glass again, she started.
 "Do you bear her ill will? You look as if you could—"

"Kill her!" ground out the gleaming teeth, while the light in the usually lack-lustre eyes shone out sharp and fierce.

Lady Melville shuddered and turned pale.

"Give me the vinaigrette," she said, tremblingly. Miss Lucas, calm and stolid again, handed the salts and returned to her task.

"You hate her, and why?" asked Lady Melville.
 "We both hate her, and why?" retorted Miss Lucas. "You because she stands between you and Rivershall, and because—You are looking at me. Will your ladyship tell me how old you think me?"

Lady Melville looked long.

"You are younger than I thought," she said.

"You are young, and yet—"

"Yes, I have slain my youth, have stolen my face and heart, have stamped a mask where my face should be, and so deceive your ladyship. I am little older than Lillian Melville—I was once as beautiful. Now can your ladyship guess why I hate her?"

Lady Melville shook her head.

"I will tell you. For three years I have endured the sight of her happiness, have witnessed the love shed round her path, have seen her pampered and petted, worshipped and adored for, have borne that worst of agonies to such a nature as mine, a half-concealed pity, a pampered, spoiled girl's commiseration for one who might have been as well cared for as herself. If your ladyship would not be shocked keep your eyes from the glass, for my face is beyond my control just now. For three years I have had my own hard lot made sharper and harder by contrast with hers. I have felt what it is to be young without youth—a woman without love. Feeling this, enduring all this, do you wonder that I hate her and hers?"

Lady Melville shuddered.

"You have a bad heart," she said, in a low voice, "a bad heart."

"I know it," was the calm reply. "But I shall have it till I die. You know now why I hate her. You can guess what reward I shall ask for my services. I ask that I may serve you to the end that before long I can pay back with interest her sickly pity and hateful sympathy; to give back 'Poor Lily' for 'Poor Kate'; to remind her that youth has gone and that love has fled. I would see her, the pampered, spoiled Lillian Melville, in the same condition as the broken-spirited, smileless governess; Kate Lucas; and for that joy, for that revenge, I will do all that woman may do, more than woman has yet dared to do."

Lady Melville rose from her chair.

"Leave me!" she said, huskily. "I will have nothing to say to you. I—I—"

She broke off, silenced by the quiet smile again.

"I have not finished your hair yet, my lady," said the lifeless voice, and Lady Melville, as if powerless to withstand, sank into her chair and covered her face with her hands.

"I said I could give you some information; I will do so. Lillian Melville stands between you and Rivershall; soon there may be something more. Mr. Besant proposed for her hand and Sir Ralph has given his consent."

Lady Melville gave a sharp cry of relief and rose again.

"Go!" she said, with determination. "What you have told me has given me strength to resist your awful temptation. Go, or I summon Lady Besant, Sir Ralph, and tell them all."

"I ask your ladyship to remain quiet for a few moments and hear me out. I am near the bell and will ring it myself if after you have heard what I have to say you still refuse to let me serve you."

Lady Melville hesitated and with nerveless hands commenced pacing the room.

"No, no, I will hear nothing," she cried. "Now go at once. Let her marry him and be happy. I have done with hate. Let her marry him and so for ever shut me from Rivershall. Let her marry him."

"But she will not marry him," said the quiet voice. "I said Mr. Besant had gained Sir Ralph's consent, but he will never gain Lillian Melville's."

"Why not—why—why?" asked Lady Melville, still walking to and fro, battling with her good and evil angels.

"Because the girl loves another and will have him."

"Another! Who?"

"Claude Ainsley," was the quiet reply. Lady Melville stopped as if she had been shot and staggered against the carved mantelpiece.

"Claude Ainsley!" she breathed, turning her dently white face to the other pale, powerful one. "No, no, that's false—false. She—she—he does not love her!"

"Does he not?" retorted the other. "Ask your own heart; look back upon the last few days; recall his conduct, his manner; remember the night he hung over her at the piano, the night he repulsed you in the garden—I am a spy, remember, so do not start; think of the loving look his face wears when he speaks to her; and, lastly, reflect that he has suddenly determined to stop in England and travel no more. You would be blind not to see what all else have seen—Claude Ainsley loves her, she loves him, and Lady Melville will lose Rivershall and the man she loves even more than it."

Every word, distinctly, coldly spoken, entered the proud woman's breast like a knife. Her face underwent a dozen different changing expressions; hate, love, rage, jealousy, were tearing at her breast. What chance had the better angel? It was drowned in such a storm of emotion.

"Oh, false heart! He never loved me!" she moaned.

The spy glided across the room and laid her stens cold hand upon the trembling arm.

"He did," she hissed in her ear, "and Lillian Melville out of the way will do so again. 'What is such a school-girl's sickly prettiness to the beauty of a woman, and such a woman as you are? Listen. This is a fancy lightly taken now, but it will grow; give it encouragement and it will grow to a passion that will sweep away the old one for you. Remove this child of a girl and he will forget her. Remove her and I will swear to bring him to your feet again, a thousand times more in love than before.'"

Lady Melville's bosom heaved, and her eyes flashing fire, asked:

"How?"

The spy drew her back to the chair, and with her hair clasped in her hand whispered in her ear:

"I know who stepped in to rob you of him. It was Harcourt. He whispered of a shame that stained his love. Remove Lillian Melville, become mistress of Rivershall, and I will prove to him that it was a shadow and that you were not too base to be Claude Ainsley's wife."

Lady Melville's face flushed and her eyes flashed with an intense longing.

"How?" she breathed.

A smile of scorn answered her.

"I have a ready wit, my lady. I go to him in tears and penitence and confess a crime, tell him that in a fit of jealousy I concocted the vile story and painted it off on Lord Harcourt. He will say, why confess it? I shall tell him that your ladyship's kindness has melted me and filled me with remorse, that my secret was unbearable and that I have come to him to confess it, knowing that Lord Harcourt had used it to separate him from your ladyship."

Lady Melville smiled with ghastly scornfulness.

"He would go to Lord Harcourt at once to hear the truth."

"But I shall have already gained his promise not to do so, and with that we shall be secure, for Claude Ainsley may die but he cannot break his word."

A flush of pride not unmingled with agony again crimsoned the beautiful woman's brow.

"Let me think, let me think," she murmured.

"Oh, if it could be!"

"It shall be," replied the temptress. "Trust to me; you are prompted by love, I am served by a still fiercer passion—hate. Promise but to help me if I call upon you, and I swear that Claude Ainsley shall return to you; refuse and he shall marry Lillian Melville. Can you fancy her flourishing at Rivershall—your Rivershall, happy in the love of Claude Ainsley—your lover?"

Maddened by the words and scornful tone, the tempted woman sprang from the chair and caught at a small jewel cabinet.

Her face was livid, her lips ablaze, her fingers trembling so that they refused to insert the key.

"His wife!" she breathed. "Never! Take this and do your work."

The cabinet fell to the ground from her trembling hands. With the dart of a serpent the spy picked it up, opened it and extracted from its inner case a small packet, then, as if she had gained all she wanted, she turned to the trembling woman, and pointing with a steady finger, and a scornful, commanding eye, whispered:

"Go to bed—and sleep!"

Then, with the packet in her hand, she glided from the room.

No sooner had the door closed than Lady Melville with a stifled cry fell full length in a swoon upon the white, spotless rug that stood before her toilet-table.

As carefully as she had ascended, the spy stole down the stairs and gained her own room.

There she dropped into a chair and commenced removing the wrappers of the packet. There were many of oiled skin and paper, the last covered a small silver box upon which was cut, as if with a penknife or scissors, in large letters the words

"Deadly Poison."

"I thought so!" she muttered, "I thought so!"

Ah, ah, how the web weaves. High and low the same strings move us. Little did her ladyship think while I acted my part what my real motive was. Well, if the high-born Lady Melville can poison the woman who stands between her gold and her love, how should I shrink from taking revenge upon the woman who ruined the man I love? Ah, Melchior, noble-hearted Melchior, my love, my god, how little do you know what a spear you have driven into my heart. I obeyed you for love of you, I obey you now for more, because I hate her. She it was who killed your heart, that heart that if it had lived I might have won; have I not a right to revenge? A tooth for a tooth, a life for a life. And what is death to a life without hope, without love? So, Lady Melville, beware! I am on the track, and, like Nemesis, I stay not my hand till the work is done."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The service and the loyalty I owe
 In doing it pays itself. *Shakespeare.*

SIR RALPH and Lillian were back at Rivershall three days before the one fixed on for the expiration of Mr. Clifford's holiday.

Lillian was not sorry to get back—indeed she had been conscious of a distinct longing for the old place for the last week, but now she was back she seemed to miss something.

It was a great change from a house filled with amusing visitors to quiet old Rivershall she told herself.

Sir Ralph might also have felt dull—he kept to his study for the first two days, and saw little of Lillian; when he did, however, he was more than ordinarily loving with her, but his tenderness was tinged with a shade of sadness which was perfectly inexplicable to the beautiful girl and troubled her.

It was, however, soon explained. The second morning after their return Miss Lucas entered Lillian's own room—a charming little boudoir near the picture gallery—with a message from Sir Ralph. He was going for a ride, would Lillian like to accompany him?

Lillian jumped up and ran down to tell him she would be delighted.

She found him already booted and spurred and more cheerful with her than he had been yesterday.

"What a lovely morning," said Lillian, running off again to get her habit on. "I shall not keep you long, papa, and, ah, how I shall enjoy it!"

Sir Ralph's face clouded over as she disappeared and he struck the leg of his riding trousers pensively. How many rides would Mr. Besant let him have with his darling?

Lillian's light, happy step was soon heard descending again, and she burst into the room to find her father sad and dispirited again and Mr. Besant whispering to him—at least talking in the audible way which went for whispering with the hunter.

"My dear," said Sir Ralph, as Mr. Besant plunged forward and grasped her hand, "I feel I shall be compelled to stay at home, but Mr. Besant, who has ridden over for the express purpose of asking you to join him in a gallop, will take care of you."

"Yes, I shall be most happy, most delighted," said Mr. Besant, in confident and most assured tones.

Lillian looked at her father uneasily. What did it mean, how could he be compelled to stay at home? No letters could have arrived, no messages, unless Mr. Besant had brought one.

"Cannot you, dear papa?" she asked. "I am so sorry," and she looked it. "But if Mr. Besant has ridden over from the Towers he must want a rest."

Mr. Besant laughed boisterously.

"A rest for ten miles! Ha! ha! A cool hundred wouldn't hurt me. Come, Lil—Miss Melville, you've got your habit on and the horses are at the door."

Lillian glanced at the window—trying hard for an excuse—but James the groom was pacing her own and Mr. Besant's horses, and there seemed no escape. Kissing Sir Ralph, she whispered:

"Nothing the matter, dear? Nothing to do with that horrid Packer?"

"No, nothing to do with Mr. Packer," said Sir Ralph, trying to smile cheerfully at Mr. Besant. "Come, run away and enjoy yourself. Take care of her, Harry."

"Trust me, sir," said Mr. Besant, significantly, and they left the room.

"Now this is what I call going the pace," said Mr. Besant, as they flew over the heath, his face ruddy with the exercise, and Lillian's hair blowing in a bright, gleaming mass straight behind her. "This is something like a spin. I'm glad you are fond of riding. I must teach you to follow the hounds."

Lillian laughed and shook her head.

"Oh, but I shall; you'll beat the best of the field

yet, I know you will. Jove, how proud I should be—"

A half-wondering, half-frightened look from Lillian pulled him up and rendered him more discreet.

"I—I mean," he said, "Sir Ralph would be proud, he's quite vain of your riding now."

"Dear papa," said Lillian, with something like a sigh, "I wish he had been able to come this morning."

"Ahem, yes," said Mr. Besant, but not very cordially. "Here we are at the boundary," he added, as he pulled up at the narrow road that divided a portion of the Rivershall estate from the Towers. "Here's the narrow boundary that divides us," he continued, looking back out of the corners of his eyes to make sure that the groom was out of hearing. "Yes," said Lillian; "throw a bridge across and they would be one."

She said it, poor girl, unconsciously enough, but it gave the opening the man wanted.

"There's another way of doing that, and a better," he said.

Lillian looked at him and turned pale. What did he mean?

He bowed, suddenly grew crimson, and was staring at her with eager eyes.

"Can't you guess?" he said. "There's a better way than throwing a bridge over, Lillian. We can make the two estates one, you and I, in a pleasant, happier way than that. You know what I mean! Don't turn away, for Heaven's sake. I mean to say what's proper, but I'm not good at that sort of thing. I never could make a speech of three lines at the hunt dinner, and that's more in my way. Lillian, we've been boy and girl together ever since we can remember. I'm very proud of you, I am indeed! There never was a fellow so hard hit as I am, I assure you. I have been on tender hooks for months past, longing to put the question. You won't refuse me? I've seen Sir Ralph and spoken to him, he says—"

He stopped, thoroughly silenced in the midst of his hurried, breathless declaration by the sudden pallor which overspread Lillian's sweet face at the mention of her father's name.

"Are you ill?" he said, anxiously. "You look—"

"No, no!" said Lillian, getting out the words with difficulty, and speaking with a strange dignity.

"You were going to say what papa said."

"Go in and win!" said Mr. Besant, hurrying on. "I knew he'd say yes, because, don't you see, the Towers and Rivershall have been hand in hand for so long. Besides, he knows I'm fond of you, any fool—I mean 'fellow'—could see that. 'Pon my word, Lillian, I've loved you ever since I can remember. You won't say no? I should never get over it. Don't say no."

Lillian struggled for calm. She could not have had a greater pain at her heart if the fox hunter had struck her with the handle of his riding-whip.

"Will you wait a moment?" she said, struggling for breath and biting her pale lips to bring the blood into them again. "I am so surprised; you have—I mean it is so sudden. Please don't speak for a moment. You say papa gave—gave his consent?"

"Yes," eagerly responded the lover. "He was all for it," he said. "We were talking of it by the boundary in the park, and I know he longed for the day when it should be broken down. It's the wish of his heart, Lillian, you won't disappoint him!"

How cunning and artful passion makes us! Well did Mr. Besant know he was pushing his strongest argument here. No, the loving, dotting daughter would not disappoint the as loving, dotting father.

The poor girl looked up the long, narrow road and at the black palings on either side with a gnawing pain at her heart.

Mr. Besant, who watched her every expression with the eyes of a huntsman running after the fox, knew that in that glance he had won.

"Oh, Lillian!" he said, "you say yes, that's right; I knew you wouldn't say no."

She turned her pale face to him for a moment, and it checked his rising exultation.

She seemed about to speak, but not a single word came; she would have reminded him that he had not asked her for her love.

Better perhaps as it was she thought; better not to wound him by the declaration that her heart was not, nor ever could be his. True, he had asked to join the two estates by becoming his wife; she could say yes to that, and if he asked no more—well, he could not complain of not getting it.

Oh, these marriages of convenience, so poisonous, so deadly are they that at their first approach the young heart is stricken with the disease they bring in their train and learns to deceive itself!

"Will you give me till to-morrow morning," she asked, with cold lips, "only till to-morrow?"

"No," he said, decidedly. "Answer now, Lillian; you must surely know your mind. You won't make everything uncomfortable and me miserable by saying 'No.' I'm sure. You're too sensible for that. Besides 'no,' as if the thought had strangely enough struck him at the moment, "I'm so fond of you!"

"Only till to-morrow!" implored Lillian.

"No, now!" he said, and the eager face grew rather darker. "Come, Lillian, say yes, and let us be happy," and he caught at the hand which was pressed against the heaving bosom and dragged it to his lips.

Startled into life and fire by the caress, Lillian's face flushed crimson and with a smothered cry she snatched the hand, no longer cold but burning, from his grasp, and pulling her horse almost upon its haunches, said, as if in desperation:

"Don't, don't; I can come no farther, I will not! I—go, please, oh, go, and let me ride home, alone, alone," and before he could recover from the shock of astonishment with which her words and gesture had thrown him she had turned her horse and was galloping down the road.

James pulled up and stared with open mouth.

"Follow your mistress," said Mr. Besant, who dared not do so himself. "Follow her and don't stand there—follow her!"

James touched his hat, and, wondering what had come to the lass for whom he had been building castles in the air all the way along the road, turned and galloped after her.

But James's cob was not up to the bay's speed, and Lillian had reached the heath and was flying across that a quarter of a mile ahead.

James pulled up and scratched his head.

"Never do to give chase," he muttered. "That darned bay all take fright and get the bit between her mouth; won't do to go into the courtyard with the horses blown or this child will get the sack and Sir Ralph's whip into the bargain. No, I'll steam round and cut her off at the lane; she'll walk in if I tell her I shall get soaked if she don't."

And with a grave shake of the head he cut across the heath to intercept his mistress and save her pace.

But unfortunately the bay did not require persuading before getting at the bit.

Quite regardless of the warning she had received at the race, Lillian in the storm of her feelings struck at the thoroughbred with the dainty whip and urged it on as if she meant to fly away from the pain and agony at the heart. The bay took the first slash quickly, at the second throw back her head, at the third laid her eyes along and down her nose and ran away.

Then Lillian found the bridle of no use, and all her soothing as powerless as the hand to stop the animal. She tried to keep it in the direction of the open road still, for by the way she had intended going there was danger—danger in the shape of an unnotable gate barring the road to Rivershall.

This gate, at which was no lodge, nor porter, for it lay upon common ground and was always opened by the attendant groom, would present an insurmountable obstacle to the light-built bay, but not, alas, to Lillian, for should the animal crash against it nothing could save her from being pitched over its head, gate and all, into the road.

They had just been carrying down some rough granite stones here Lillian remembered and a shudder ran through her whole frame as she found that the runaway would not answer her strain on the left rein, but was making for the fatal gate at a lightning pace.

She tried to listen for James, tried to call out, but her tongue would not utter a sound.

She could see the gate, and—oh, thank Heaven, there was some one there!

No, it was only a cow, which had taken flight and was ricocheting away.

Now surely she could turn her, another minute it would be too late.

Blind with passion and fear, the devoted horse saw nothing and sped on like an arrow from the bow.

Lillian closed her eyes. At that moment she remembered years ago vexing her father with some childish, infantile ill temper; how she longed with an intense longing that she could forget it! But of all the years of love and peace, of ever-growing affection and devotion that simple, silly incident alone would haunt her.

Another minute—she could almost feel the crash of her face and head upon the cruel, cruel stones.

"Papa! Papa!" burst from her lips.

"Cling tight, for Heaven's sake!" suddenly came a response.

And at the moment she expected to be hurled over the gate she saw through the haze just gathering before her something like the figure of a man literally spring to the horse's neck and throw him down.

For a moment all was dark, then when she opened her eyes she saw, for the first thing, the foam-covered bay panting at the gate.

Looking up, she saw for the next that she was lying upon the ground with her head upon a man's arm. A pause and it occurred to her that she knew the face. Gathering together all her confused senses, she recognized the grave and actually calm face of Mr. Clifford, with two splashes of blood on each cheek and a gash over one brow.

"Thank Heaven!" he murmured, hoarsely, "I feared you had fainted. Are you hurt?"

She looked at him and attempted to rise.

"Not yet," he said, "please raise this arm," and he helped her to do so. "Does it pain you?"

She shook her head, still keeping her eyes fixed upon his face.

"Now the other. Do you feel as if that was injured?"

For reply she rose to her feet and pressed her hand to her forehead.

"Enough of me, please," she said, in a strangely deep and thrilling voice; her eyes were all ablaze one moment, all melting the next. "Enough of me, I am not hurt and deserve it if I were, but you—what a stress there was upon the word—you are hurt."

"Nothing of any consequence, thank you," he said, in the tone in which he would thank her for a pencil or a piece of paper. "I'm afraid the horse is ruined, and that's a pity."

She stamped her foot and pointed—actually pointed to his face.

"You are bleeding," she said; "your face is cut—badly out, and—"

She stopped, for Mr. Clifford had grown suddenly pale and dropped on to the grass with his head down.

She was on her knee beside him in a moment.

"You are very much hurt!" she wailed. "I knew it, I knew it! Your arm is hanging quite useless. Oh, dear, oh, dear, what shall I do? Oh, if someone would come. Stay; you must stop here—you must—alone, until I ride home and fetch them."

He sprang to his feet as if she had struck him.

"Mount it again," he said, almost fiercely. "If I thought so I would break its leg," and he made a movement towards the animal as if he meant to do it there and then. "No, I am all right, my arm is bruised a little, it will be easy in a few moments, Miss Melville."

She stopped him again.

"I know better," she said, "your arm is broken, and you are suffering intolerable pain, although you are smiling."

She had opened the gate as she spoke.

"If you can only wait there till I send them."

He put himself before the gate and looked sternly at her.

"Miss Melville, he said, "you think I served you just now—"

She stamped her foot.

"Stand aside, sir; served me—you saved my life!"

"Then I venture to ask you to make me some return. I must be gone, for there is your groom coming. If you care to do me a favour in return for the accident which led to my being here you can do it by refraining from mentioning my name or connection with this beast's fright. If you ask my reasons I can only give you one—there is no time—and that is that I shall lose my situation—shall be compelled to leave a comfortable home and return to—no matter; will you promise me?"

"Why should you?" asked Lillian, in a fever of anxiety to get help for him.

He opened the gate.

"You will not," he said. "I thank you for letting me ask you. To-morrow I must prepare to quit the only place in which I have known peace and happiness."

The groom's horse pattered nearer and nearer.

Lillian bit her lips.

"It is base ingratitude, I will not—I cannot—I—"

He bowed and opened the gate for her.

His determined face frightened her.

"I promise," she breathed.

His face cleared.

"A thousand thanks," he said, trying to speak coolly. "Now, there is only a moment, you have only to stand beside your horse until the groom comes up, then exchange with him and ride home. Here is your hat uninjured. I have your promise not to mention even my name."

Then before she could reply or do aught but gaze at him with unforgiving eyes and quivering lips he plunged into the bushes at the side of the road and disappeared.

Lillian exchanged horses with the groom and rode slowly home. Truly it had been an eventful day, but the latter incident had completely eclipsed all the importance of the former.

That she was Mr. Besant's promised bride was a hard enough thought, but that Mr. Clifford should be lying in the furze bushes on the heath with a broken arm and a lacerated face, to say nothing of worse ills, all contracted for her sake, and in her behalf, was a still harder one.

James noticed his mistress's feverish haste to get home, but he was still more attracted by the conduct of the bay.

"This 'ere animal has been a goin' of it uncommon strong," he thought; "I shouldn't wonder if she'd been cutting away again. Miss Lillian looks done up somehow too. It's a rum go—a regular rum go."

If Sir Ralph says anything more about the horse I shall say 'sell her.'"

But Sir Ralph did not say anything about the horse, he was too full of another subject. He met Lillian in the courtyard without his hat, which was not him a state of excitement. A glance at her face told him that Mr. Besant had put his proposal.

"I am so glad you are back, my dear," he said, lifting her from the saddle and taking her gauntlets with old-fashioned courtesy. "I grew anxious. Where is Mr. Besant?"

"Gone home to the Towers, papa," said Lillian, who seemed to avoid his eyes, and spoke in a slightly constrained tone.

"Why, what have you done to the bay?" said Sir Ralph, eyeing the once showy-looking but now utterly pumped-out horse with astonishment.

"She has been a good gallop," said Lillian, "and is quite exhausted. I don't think I like her quite so well as I did."

"Nor I," said Sir Ralph. "You can sell her, James, or turn her out as soon as you like."

Lillian followed Sir Ralph into the study.

Sir Ralph moved to the fire, it was his turn to avoid Lillian now, he shrank from what he knew was coming.

"Have—have you had a pleasant ride, my dear?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied, "very pleasant; we rode across the heath and round the boundary lane."

"And was Harry agreeable?"

Lillian remained silent.

"Papa," she said, suddenly going up to him and laying her head upon his shoulder, "why could you not come with us this morning?" As she spoke she looked at the door and seemed listening.

A slight sound in the hall made her start.

Sir Ralph did not notice her abstraction, he was too much taken up with his own grief.

"I—I had some letters to write," he said. "Besides, Harry was too good a companion to spoil, three are company and two are none."

"Papa," she said, drawing still closer and growing paler, but still listening. "Mr. Besant asked me a question—What was that? I fancied I heard something in the hall."

Sir Ralph listened.

"I heard nothing, my dear," he said. "Harry asked you a question, I thought he would, and what was it, Lily, my darling?"

"Whether I would be his wife?" said Lillian, with slow distinctness.

Sir Ralph groaned and leant his head upon his hand.

"And—and what did you say, my darling? It would kill me to part with you."

"I said—First, papa, what did you say when he asked you for your consent?"

"I said, yes, if you 'Lillian' would echo it."

"You would like me to marry him, papa?—What is that?—yes, that is some one in the hall, I'm sure!"

Sir Ralph listened, he could not understand why Lillian should be so particular in her attention to the hall door to-night. She was not so usually. Did she expect Mr. Besant?

"It is some one," he said. "But tell me, my dear, what did you say? are you to be mistress of the Towers? will you leave me? Oh, Lillian, my only darling, what should I do without you?"

She kissed him and tears filled her eyes—but the eyes were still fixed on the door.

A knock came, she started.

Sir Ralph, annoyed at and unwilling to be disturbed, walked to the door and opened it.

Mrs. Williams, in a state of excitement and with traces of late tears in her honest eyes, stood courtesying outside.

"Well?" said Sir Ralph.

"If you please, sir, Mr. Clifford—"

"What about him, has he returned?" asked Sir Ralph, impatiently.

"Oh, yes, sir," said Mrs. Williams, turning pale and trembling at the angry look and impatient air. "He has come back, sir, but very ill, oh, very ill. He's in the library and wishes to speak with you a moment."

"Very ill," said Sir Ralph, "wishes to speak with me? Why did you not send for the doctor?" and he looked wistfully at Lillian.

He did not want to leave her.

"Mr. Clifford says no doctor was to be sent for, and that he would not detain you for a moment, when you chose to come. He said as he was not in any hurry but he has got a broken arm, Sir Ralph—"

Sir Ralph stepped out at once and closed the door. "Why did you not say he had broken his arm at once?" he said, kindly. "Poor fellow, an accident I suppose," and hurried through the grand hall to the library.

Mr. Clifford, very pale and with his left arm hanging uselessly to his side, was standing waiting for him.

That he was in great pain was evident by his

whole face and blazing eyes, that he could bear it and was straining every effort to show no sign was also made plain by the tight compression of his lips and the clenched right hand.

"I am so sorry to trouble you, sir," he said, "but on returning from my excursion this afternoon I met with an accident. I fell from the rock on the moor, and I am afraid have broken my arm. I have engaged a bed at the 'Arms,' and will go there immediately with your permission; but would not do so until I had presented myself."

Sir Ralph's face grew dark, and with his mightiest stride he strode to the bell and rang it.

"Go to the 'Arms,' sir!" he said, with stately reproach. "Pray, from what treatment at Rivershall have you concluded that I should allow you to leave my roof under such circumstances?"

"Of my treatment at Rivershall I have only to speak with the deepest gratitude, sir," replied the tutor, with difficulty. "It is to the fact of your kindness that I am loth to lay so heavy a burden as an invalid upon your care. The 'Arms' is a clean place, and I shall be well taken care of. I implore you to let me go there. I should never forgive myself if I suffered my carelessness to entail so much trouble upon you. Let me go, sir!"

Sir Ralph's only answer was to summon two footmen, Mrs. Williams, and a groom. The first he bade help Mr. Clifford to his room, the second needed no bidding to hurry on before and get things ready, and the groom he despatched for a doctor.

Not content with this proof of his regard for the invalid, Sir Ralph himself followed upstairs and looked at the arm, which by this time was much discoloured, and must have given the owner tremendous pain.

"This is a bad fracture," said Sir Ralph. "A fall—eh? I cannot understand it. No matter. Do not trouble to speak now. I will hear the particulars later. You are out about the face too; most unfortunate."

Mr. Clifford did not offer any explanations, and Sir Ralph, after seeing that all was done that could be accomplished before the doctor came, went down to the study to await his appearance.

Lillian was all excitement to hear the news, and he found it necessary to calm her before he communicated the facts.

When she learnt them she burst into tears.

"Oh, this day, this terrible day, how long it seems!" she said. "And is it a very bad break, papa?"

"Here is the doctor," said Sir Ralph, as the physician came down the stairs at a dignified pace, looking very important and businesslike.

"Well," said Sir Ralph, "how did you find him, and how bad is it?"

The doctor shook his head and glanced at Miss Melville, with whom he had already shaken hands. Lillian, if she saw the glance, did not choose to retreat, but stood seemingly as anxious to hear the bulletin as Sir Ralph.

"Well," said the doctor, "it is a most extraordinary case, most extraordinary! A fall from a rock!—where? It's a very bad fracture. Pray does Mr. —"

"Clifford," said Sir Ralph, in his impatient way.

"Does Mr. Clifford drink?" said the old man.

Lillian uttered an indignant exclamation.

Sir Ralph frowned.

"I beg his pardon, of course," said the doctor, taking a pinch of snuff, "but in no other way than through intoxication can I account for a man knocking himself so much about. How did he come to fall off the hill, and when he found himself falling why on earth didn't he stop?"

Sir Ralph, who was used to the old man's mannerisms, nodded impatiently.

"No matter," he said; "the question is how far is he hurt?"

"Very badly," said the doctor, "very serious indeed; a compound fracture in the most awkward place. It wouldn't have mattered so much if taken care of at once, but some time has passed; it may—mind, I don't say that it will—but it may become inflamed. Inflammation once set in mortification will follow, and then the arm must come off."

Lillian uttered a cry that brought their hearts into their mouths. It was not a loud cry, but, oh, what an awful one!

Sir Ralph swung round and at sight of her white face caught her on his arm.

She recovered immediately, however, and stood by his side, pale but resolute.

"I—I am ashamed," she murmured, "but it was too dreadful. Oh, doctor, you must save him! It is too horrible! Surely you can save him! Oh, papa, papa!"

"Hush, my dear," said Sir Ralph, soothingly, as she hid her face upon his arm and groaned, not sobbed.

The doctor smiled. Doctors, alas, are too used to scenes of suffering and bodily anguish to be much affected by them, and it is as well they are not, for they would have miserable lives of it.

"Come, come, my dear Miss Melville," he remonstrated, "it may not be so serious yet. I only said it may be. But we will hope for the best, we will hope for the best," and he smiled again.

Sir Ralph took Lillian into the drawing-room and came back to the library.

"I am sorry," he said, "that Lillian was near, doctor, but she is naturally affected; she is tender-hearted, and the young fellow left here a fortnight since in perfect health and strength," and he sighed. The doctor sighed also.

"We never know what a day may bring forth," he said, with sententious gravity. "I think I'll just go and see how he is getting on," and he walked off with due gravity.

Sir Ralph, left alone, paced the library with anxious face. He had not learnt how it had fared with Mr. Besant yet, and he was all anxiety to do so. He could not sleep until he knew, and so, summoning up his strength, went into the drawing-room, where Lillian was sitting huddled up in a corner of the large sofa, with her face in her hands.

She looked up as he entered and said:

"How is he, papa? how is he?"

"I do not know," said Sir Ralph; "the doctor has just gone up again. My dear Lillian, you must not take it to heart so much, the poor young fellow will no doubt get through it well enough. The doctor looked on the worst side."

Lillian shuddered.

"Oh," she breathed, "to lose his arm, and for me—"

Sir Ralph stared.

"For me not to be sorry," stammered Lillian, and she rose with her hands clasped before her.

Sir Ralph was alarmed. It was clearly impossible to question her to-night. He rang the bell and summoned Lillian's maid.

Miss Lucas glided in at the same time.

Lillian sprang towards her.

"Oh, Kate, how is he?"

"Better, my dear Lillian," replied Miss Lucas, as calmly as usual. "The doctor says there will, he thinks, be no need for amputation."

Lillian drew a long breath and brushed the hair from her forehead. She was recalled to herself and her position by the sight of the quiet, ice-like governess.

"I am so glad," she said, with a little laugh that was rather hollow, "I have such a horror of any such thing. I am so glad. Papa, I am afraid you will not think I am very brave, but—but—"

"I know, my dear," said Sir Ralph, kissing her.

"There, go to bed and sleep well. Mr. Clifford is in no danger."

She kissed him, quiet enough now, and, followed by her maid, stole to her room.

(To be continued.)

THE GREAT SALT LAKE.—There are no fish in the Great Salt Lake. The only living thing beneath its waters is a worm about a quarter of an inch long. This worm shows up beautifully beneath the lens of a microscope. When a storm arises the worms are driven ashore by thousands, and devoured by the black gulls. There is a pure stream pouring into the lake. It was filled with little chubs and shiners. The fish became frightened and were driven down the brook into the briny lake. The instant they touched its waters they came to the surface, belly upwards, and died without a gasp.

INSCRIPTION IN CHIDDINGFOLD CHURCHYARD.—The following inscription, cut upon a slab of hard Robinhood stone and bordered with Petworth marble, has just been inserted by the rector (Rev. L. M. Humbert) in the eastern wall of Chiddingfold Churchyard, by the side of which the Bishop of Winchester's remains rested for two hours on their way from Abinger to Lavington, after the inquest which followed upon the sad accident which caused his death.—"Near this spot, at eventide, on Monday, July 21, MDCCCLXXXIII., rested the body of Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Winchester, on its last journey home to Lavington. By a fall from his horse he was called suddenly from unwearied labour to eternal rest. Be ye therefore ready also."

DEPARTURE OF ENGLISH CRICKETERS FOR AUSTRALIA.—On Wednesday, the 21st of October, the cricketers deputed to represent England in the Australian cricket-field arrived at Southampton, and left in the ship "Mirzapore" for Australia. They consist of the following—W. G. Grace, G. F. Grace, J. A. Bush, W. G. Gilbert, F. H. Boulton, amateurs; and Jupp, Southerton, R. Humphrey, Lillywhite, Greenwood, Osceot, and M. McIntyre, professionals. They will play their first match on the 29th of December at Melbourne, and will play at Ballarat, Castlemaine, Sandhurst, Geelong, Sydney, Adelaide, Bathurst, Hobartown, and Launceston, and their last match will be the return game at Melbourne on the 19th of March. They will sail for England on the 25th March, and are expected to arrive early in May.



[COSMO AT BAY.]

THE FORESTER'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER V.

Not Africa owns a serpent I abhor
More than thy fame, and envy. *Shakespeare.*

GALPA, of whom more in detail hereafter, withdrew—going not toward the groups of young nobles, however, who would have tried her temper with jests, unless restrained by fear of the ire of her master—but apart to the edge of the green at the left of the fountain.

The frown on the brow of the prince vanished the instant he began to speak to the count. Dissimilar as their natures were, the prince loved his illegitimate brother profoundly.

"Brother," he said, in a low, sad tone, and laying his hand gently on the right arm of the count—that arm which, unsuspected by him, had been on the point of driving a dagger to his heart a few minutes before—"I am deeply grieved in this matter."

"Fish!" replied the count, with a light laugh. "Tis but a peasant girl, Colonna, and I am already sharply punished for my folly," he added, tapping his wounded arm with the crossbow-bolt which he held in his hand.

"I thank Heaven that the bolt went not through thy heart, Alfrasco. It was well aimed."

"And the heart well defended by my breastplate—the same thou gavest me, Colonna, just when thou wast departing upon that tour to France from which thou hast so wonderfully turned. Why, man," said the count, laughing, "had Queen Joanna herself appeared instead of thee I should not have been more surprised."

"My presence is readily explained, Alfrasco—but of that hereafter. Thou art to meditate evil no more to yon maiden."

"Tis thy wish, Colonna?"

"Nay, more; my command as her lord, and therefore by right her protector."

"Her lord!"

"Ay. We stand on the ancient countship of Del Parso, and the queen has been pleased to grant all the province and the title of Count Del Parso to me as a gift."

"Ah!" said the count, with a heart full of bitter envy, though he displayed only pleasure. "When was her majesty so generous?"

"A few days after my departure to begin that foreign tour a messenger from her majesty overtook me with a letter from Queen Joanna—"

"Who madly loves thee, Colonna, though she is

older than thy dead mother would be had that noble lady lived," interrupted the count, smiling.

"Not a word of that, Alfrasco, since I doubt not 'tis with a mother's affection the queen loves me," replied the prince, blushing.

"Now thou knowest that is not true!" said the count, laughing. "Why, man, had I half thy chance I'd be Alfrasco, King of Naples, now. But what said the queen in her letter?"

"That if I would visit the province instead of going to France, and so be back in Naples ere two months might pass, the province and its title should be mine."

"Ah, and being so poor and landless, and poverty-stricken in titles, Colonna," said the count, ironically, while he smiled to hide the envious writhing of his soul, "thou camest as a bird returns to its nest."

"Nay; I should have gone to the end of my contemplated tour, Alfrasco, but from a letter of our father, the grand constable, which enforced the wish of the queen. The letter of our father was a command, and brief. It said simply: 'Obey the wish of her majesty. I am not jealous of thee, my son, though I wish the same gift were offered to thy brother, Alfrasco. See that this chance to add to the wealth and power of the Caraccioli does not escape because of thy prudishness. Obey.'"

"A wily and an avaricious head rests on the broad shoulders of our sire, the grand constable," remarked the count. "'Twas a pity he was not wedded to my mother," he added, in thought. "For then no Colonna, the legitimate, would have won the heart of that amorous old queen with the blue eyes of his mother. My eyes might have made me King of Naples had Joanna never seen thine!"

"Say naught against our father," said the prince, unsuspecting of the volcano of envy and hate concealed in the heart of his brother, "for he loves thee as his first-born, far more than he does me, Alfrasco."

"Yes, yes," replied the count, with a light laugh that gave no token of the bitterness in his soul. "So thou camest to this province?"

"Yes, but not so much to see what manner of gift her majesty had made to me as to be in time to capture the man who twenty years ago threatened to cut off thy ears."

"Ha!" exclaimed the count, staring. "Rizzio di Sicardo!"

"My soul," replied the prince, smiling, "thou sayest, 'Rizzio di Sicardo!' with an accent as if more than that noted-brigand had menaced thy ears!"

"Nay," said the count, knitting his brow, "he

alone hath ever dared utter such a threat. But hast heard Sicardo was near Atrani!"

"Ay, or lately seen in the province Del Parso. One of my train chanced to speak of the brigand, and to say that he had seen one who had served in Sicardo's band in Sicily—"

"Not Borrelli?" interrupted the count.

"Nay, my retainer spoke not of Borrelli—and by the way I regret to see that ruffian again in thy service, Alfrasco."

"Oh, the fellow has the heart of a chicken, and would rather serve me than Sicardo—"

"What! he has served with the brigand?"

"Only as a thief, or spy, or something of that kind. He was arrested not many weeks since in Naples by my agents, who are ever seeking for that wily brigand Sicardo, and I obtained his pardon from our sire, the grand constable. No more of Borrelli. I fear him not. Thou wast speaking of what thy retainer said of Rizzio di Sicardo."

"Yes. That told me by my retainer led me to visit this province as a huntsman, with a few friends, my military escort to follow us; but yesterday we heard by chance that Sicardo was still in Sicily. Hunting yesterday afoot, I became separated from my friends, and after much wandering, far into the night, I took refuge and sleep in a small grotto not far from this place. The screams of a woman led me hither after I awoke—from a dream."

"From a dream!" repeated the count, observing the deep blush that suddenly suffused the tell-tale complexion of the prince.

"A dream in which a maiden seemed to bend over me as I slept."

"Ah!"

"And to kiss softly one of my eyes—"

"Oh!"

"And then the other—"

"Ha!"

"And then my lips," added the prince, a thrill of strange delight causing his blue eyes to dilate.

"And what more?" demanded the count, eagerly, while a spasm of fierce jealousy seized his heart.

"I opened my eyes and beheld yon maiden—"

"Nay!"

"I am sure 'twas she, Alfrasco, though she vanished so quickly, ere my enchanted eyes had compassed the full measure of her glorious beauty, that I deemed all a vision until I beheld her here in a swoon. Thou art to meditate no more evil against her, Alfrasco."

"That I do swear, my dear brother, since her charms so please thee."

"Nay, nay—I mean not that—the maiden, though indeed peerless in beauty, is too far below my station

for Colonna Caraccioli to make love to her with thought of honourable marriage; and Colonna Caraccioli is too honourable a gentleman, thank Heaven! ever to dream of offering her or any other of her sex dishonourable love."

"Thou and the original of this old stone image," said the count, with a derisive glance at the statue of St. Anthony, "should have dwelt together in the desert. You maiden is, Colonna, beautiful as an angel."

"In truth she is divine!" murmured the prince, with his eyes devouring the loveliness of that glorious face and form. "Brother, thou art indeed as cruel as report doth say of thee."

"Pooh! pooh!" smiled the count.

"And has she no father able to avenge her wrongs?"

"More than the fright I have given her she hath had no wrong at my hands," replied the count. "I tell thee, Colonna, her beauty maddened me. I courted her as a peasant calling myself Gia Petti, and she scorned me."

"She divined that thou wast a treacherous wooer."

"I wooed her as Alfrasco of Zapponecco."

"With violence."

"Nay, I first asked her to be my wife, my countess."

"Meaning to deceive her?"

"She would have loved the deceit in time—but the affair is at an end."

"Unless the father demands justice of me, his lord."

"And my brother," said the count, smiling.

"Thy brother loves thee, Alfrasco, and the divine beauty of you maiden might plead for excuse of the outrage thou hast well nigh consummated; but thy brother trusts he will ever be a just prince. Thy crime, done by any of yonder nobles, might have cost the loss of the right hand."

The count frowned and gazed suddenly to the ground as he replied:

"My lord remembers only that he is the lord of this soil—"

"And the protector of its people," said the prince.

"But he forgets that he is my father's son," added the count.

"Nay dear brother," said the prince, kindly, "I will stand thy friend in this matter, though if you gray-bearded old man thy knaves are bringing hitherward"—and here the prince pointed toward Cosmo the Forester, bound and in the grasp of Manfredi and the others who had overtaken and captured the old man, and were just dragging rather than leading him from the forest—"if he demands the penalty of the ancient law of this province I must heed his suit or be unjust."

"What! art in earnest, Colonna? Wouldst imperil my right hand because of a trifling folly against a beggarly peasant girl?"

"Is thy right hand more precious to thee because thou art a count than her honour is to her because she is only a peasant maid?" replied the prince, with more severity of tone and mien than he had ever till that moment spoken to his brother.

"By Heaven!" ejaculated the count, in his heart, "my right hand shall not be lopped off at the wrist ere it drives my dagger to the heart of this justice-mad idiot! Why, I thought he would treat the matter as a mere jest, and be content with my promise not to meditate evil more against the girl—and, lo! he speaks of the ancient law of Del Parsio to me! My curse on him—even if he means but to try to frighten me. Oh, well! let's have the trial, and see if 'twill be an easy matter to smite off the right hand of Alfrasco Caraccioli! He and his friends are eleven—I and mine are nine! By St. Jude—but pish! he will not dare—he means to teach me a lesson! 'Tis all a jest!"

CHAPTER VI.

Whose hand is it that the forest bear doth lick?
Not his that spoils her young before her face.

Shakespeare.

WHILE the count reasoned thus his followers were leading Cosmo the Forester toward the fountain.

Cosmo, whom we left in the forest just after he had heard the first shrieks uttered by Vittoria, had arrived at the summit of the fountain-rock, and recognizing the face of Lord Alfrasco, whom he now knew to be the man whom he had seen under the name of Gia Petti at Atrani, let fly at him the only bolt he had, taking a quick but sure aim at his heart; and the heart of Alfrasco would have been pierced but for the excellence of the breastplate he wore under the snowy ruffe of his shirt.

Cosmo had not the least doubt that his bolt had riven the heart of the lawless lord, and uttered a low cry of fierce joy as he saw the stricken noble reel back as if fatally wounded.

But without pausing to see if the wounded man fell or was caught in the arms of those near him, the forester darted into the woods again, eager to se-

cure the sack of bolts, to speed back again to the fountain to hurl every one of the steel-pointed shafts into the breasts of those who might dare attempt to insult his child.

Had the old man had more bolts he would not have left the place of advantage above the fountain while a bolt or an enemy remained. Had he been armed with his great two-handed sword, then standing like a sleeping sentinel at the head of Vittoria's bed at the cottage, the brave old man would have leaped from perilous ledge to ledge and hurled his formidable prowess of arm and skill at a host in defence of his child.

But armed as he was, with only a boltless crossbow, for his dagger had fallen from its sheath as he bounded through the woods, he knew that the force below would overwhelm him in a moment.

"They are nobles of Naples—nearly all of them!" thought Cosmo, as he flew rather than ran in the direction of the grotto. "A swarm of lawless vipers, no doubt, like him whose scoundrel life I have smitten from the earth he disgraced. Dogs! wolves! tigers! ye have my daughter with ye yet—but your Neapolitan mothers shall mourn the loss of more than one ere you carry Vittoria from the soil of Del Parsio!"

The old man, filled with such fury, had rushed on, and reached the spot where the staff thrown away by Vittoria had fallen, when Manfredi, Borrelli and the others sent after him by the count overtook him.

He heard the rapid tread of his pursuers crashing behind him, and strained every sinew to reach the grotto ere he turned at bay, hopeless of getting his bolts.

His pursuers were upon him and around him as he snatched up the staff and bade them stand back, making a thrust with the staff as he spoke at the face of the one nearest to him.

This one chanced to be Manfredi, and the spike of the staff slightly tore the bravo's cheek.

Between Cosmo and Manfredi hung on a low branch of a tree the handkerchief which Vittoria had rolled into a ball and thrown away after wiping the viper's venom from the golden band.

Maddened by rage and pain, and therefore forgetting the command of the prince, Manfredi rushed at Cosmo with uplifted sword, the others having recoiled from the defiant face and attitude of the old forester.

As Manfredi sprang forward his rush at Cosmo swept the handkerchief over his wounded face, and that part of the kerchief moist with the viper's venom was dragged over the gaping slash just made in his cheek by the spiked staff of the forester.

The handkerchief, detached from the branch, clung to the brave's face and across his eyes, blinding him for the moment.

Cosmo seized the moment to renew his flight toward the grotto. The companions of Manfredi again bounded forward and once more forced the old man to turn at bay, which he did by halting again and standing with his back to a large tree.

The others began to narrow their circle around him, advancing with the points of their swords aiming at his throat and calling upon him to surrender.

Manfredi, having now cast the handkerchief from his face, again rushed forward, shouting:

"At least I will give the old wolf one prick with my sword to pay him for the thrust of his pike!"

But at the third leap forward of the infuriated bravo he uttered a yell of pain, and, stumbling, fell headlong.

The bodkin cast away by Vittoria was between him and Cosmo. It had fallen with its keen needle-like point upwards, its head remaining embedded in the decayed bark of a dead bough upon which it had fallen.

Manfredi in leaping to smite or stab Cosmo had placed his right foot directly upon the point of the bodkin, with all his might and all the violence of his furious bound. The head of the bodkin, forced downward a little, instantly meeting the stony, hard and undecayed heart of the bough, could be forced no farther, and its point pierced though the light sandal of the bravo deep into the ball of his foot, and showed itself on the upper side of his foot.

Thus suddenly and painfully pierced Manfredi stumbled, yelled, and fell headlong.

Ere he could draw the bodkin from the wound and rise to his feet his companions had disarmed Cosmo and bound him.

Even then Manfredi would have stabbed the old man but for Borrelli, who with a flint of his sword sent that of the enraged bravo spinning in the air.

"Did not Lord Colonna bid us not harm the man?" exclaimed Borrelli. "Thou shalt slay me ere thou shalt slay Cosmo!"

"Ah!" said the forester, with a keen glance at the face of Borrelli, who until that instant had not spoken. "Thou wast in my cottage a few weeks ago! Thou hast served with him in Sicily. Thou wilt be my friend?"

"Silence, old man. I can only save thy life from this man's rage now!" remarked Borrelli, in Spanish, and in a subdued tone.

But Manfredi understood Spanish and caught the words. He said nothing, but he kept the matter in his mind, for he was enraged now with Borrelli for having disarmed him with a mere twist of the hand in the presence of the others.

Muttering and limping, he picked up his sword and then followed his companions as they led Cosmo away in the direction of the fountain.

The venom on the handkerchief had lost some of its vitality from exposure to the air, but enough had entered the wounded cheeks of the bravo to poison his blood.

Manfredi carried with him the handkerchief, for after picking up his sword he had also taken up the handkerchief and bound it around his head so as to staunch the flow of blood from what remained of the ear pierced by the javelin of the prince, and from the wound made by Cosmo's spike in his cheek.

This handkerchief was not Vittoria's, but belonged to Cosmo, and his name "Cosmo" was on it, embroidered there by the hands of his wife, Donna Castelletta.

Vittoria had caught it up that morning as she left the cottage, mistaking it for one of her own or her mother's.

When Manfredi followed after his companions he also carried with him the iron-pointed staff with which the old man had wounded him.

The bodkin was lost to sight for ever, somewhere in the dead leaves where the wounded bravo had hurled it after drawing it from his pierced foot with his teeth.

It had picked the points of the viper's broken fangs from the golden band of Vittoria, and it had saved Cosmo's body from a furious thrust by checking the blind rage of the bravo.

As Borrelli and the others neared the edge of the forest around the fountain-green Manfredi, eager to display his zeal, rushed forward and grasped the shoulder of the old man, and so half led, half pushed him until the party stood before the count and the prince.

Vittoria, seated on the bench, with her eyes cast down, was not at once aware of the presence of her father.

She had lifted her gaze from the ground a moment before the old man was led from the thicket, but, seeing many curious eyes turned upon her by the followers of the prince as they stood at a distance, modestly fixed her gaze again upon the grass at her feet.

There she had continued to hold it, even while she heard the clink of sheathed swords and daggers as the captors of Cosmo led him forward.

"My lord," said Manfredi, in a pompous tone, loud and harsh, "I am the only wounded one of the party, and here is the man who attempted thy lordship's sacred life—Cosmo the Forester."

"Ah! 'tis my poor father!" cried Vittoria, and springing to her feet she rushed to the prisoner and threw her beautiful arms around his neck and sobbed on his bosom.

"Heaven be orally, dear child," said Cosmo, as he pressed his lips to her brow, whence the golden band had been pressed back by the weight of her head on his breast. "Gia Petti lives yet! And yet the bolt was truly aimed, and I saw him reel under the stroke. Heaven be thy ally, child, for the life of thy father is doomed already in the fierce eye of Count Alfrasco."

"Hope, father! hope! for the other—"

"Is a Caraccioli too," interrupted Cosmo, shuddering. "Do I not know the features of his accursed house but too well?" muttered the old man from his set teeth. "The Caraccioli! Tigers! wolves! dogs! assassins! lawless rakes! bitter enemies! false friends! schemers! human fiends every one! Who should know it better than I?"

"Cease thy mothing, old bear of the wood!" said Manfredi. "Thou art in the presence of the noble Count of Zapponecco, and his brother, Lord Colonna Caraccioli, and some day to be Prince Torre del Greco."

"Silence, knave," commanded the prince, sternly, and advancing a pace towards the captive. "Fall back from the prisoner. Maiden, is he thy father?"

"He is, noble sir, and I pray thy grace to pardon him if he hath done aught not right," began Vittoria, pleadingly, kneeling and clasping her lovely hands, which she lifted entreatingly towards the prince.

"Nay, he is a very dove! a harmless old hermit, who wounds counts with crossbow bolts!" sneered the count.

"And spikes the faithful followers of noble lords in the face!" growled Manfredi, glaring at the captive over the bloodstained handkerchief tied around his face.

"Give me that staff, fellow," commanded the prince, in a calm voice.

"Ay, thy grace!" said Manfredi, extending the staff, which was fully ten feet in length, to the prince. "It was with this base thing that the old boar turned upon us and spiked me in the face."

"Else thou wouldst have stabbed me!" said the old man, calmly.

"Sob!" exclaimed the prince, his blue eyes flashing with a sudden light.

"He did aim a bolt at the heart of my lord," growled the bravo.

"And did not I, who am the lord of thy lord while he stands on this soil of Del Parso, bid thee not to harm the old man—and but now command thee to be silent?"

"Ha! 'the lord of thy lord'—it needed not so much!" muttered the count, who stood a little aloof, his eyes burning with a sombre fire.

Those eyes flamed up like lightning the next instant as a loud "thwack" resounded in the air, and Manfredi fell stunned to the sword by a blow on the head from the heavy staff in the hands of the prince.

"Thou'lt be silent now, knave," said the prince, a bright red spot on each fair cheek as he cast a scornful glance at the prostrate bravo. "Nay, Count Alfrasco, no insult is intended to thee—but this tiger-jawed knave said in Naples, in the hearing of my servant, that Colonna Caraccioli was more a woman than a man. Ask him when he hath his senses again if the blow I have just given him came upon his thick skull like the tapping of a lady's fan."

"For his impertinence he deserves the blow, my lord," replied the count, bowing and smiling, but with rage in his soul.

"Thy name, old man?" said the prince.

"Cosmo di Siccardoli, my lord."

"Siccardoli!" replied the prince, as if something in the name arrested his attention. "Siccardoli? Not Sicardo?"

"Not Sicardo, my lord."

"Thou knowest one called Sicardo?"

"I have heard of a brigand of that name, prince, but my name is Siccardoli, and I would the brigand had less of that honest name than he hath," replied Cosmo, gravely.

"Good!" thought the count. "The old knave does not wish to be known as the father of the brigand Rizzio di Sicardo."

And, catching the eyes of Borrelli and Galpa fixed upon him, the count placed his finger on his lips.

By that gesture and his frown, unseen by the prince, Borrelli and Galpa knew that the count did not wish the prince to learn that Vittoria was the sister of a brigand.

"Thou livest near this spot, old man?"

"A mile hence stands my cottage, my lord. I am chief forester of this province of Del Parso."

"Under whose hand holdst thou that office?"

"Under the hand of the Queen of Naples, my lord, as the province belongs to the crown, to which it reverted at the death of the last Count Del Parso without heirs, twenty years ago. A friend of mine in Naples obtained the office for me some ten years ago."

"There is an air in thy speech and appearance, old man, that smacks a little of higher education and nobler breeding than we usually find in men of thy calling."

"I am simply Cosmo the Forester, my lord—though in my youth I dwelt in cities, and was something of a scholar."

"Thou hast committed a grave crime, old man."

"My lord," replied the old man, calmly, "as an officer, though an humble one, of the queen, and not holding my office under any hand save her majesty, I demand the right to be tried before the queen for what offence I may have committed in defending my child—this helpless maiden—from the lawless Alfrasco of Zapponezzo. As master, under her majesty's commission, of this forest, I am as much—nay, more a lord here than any I see before me."

"Smite the old villain in the mouth," said the count.

"Oh, father! speak not so boldly!" whispered Vittoria, trembling at her father's audacity.

"Nay," continued the brave old man, "so long as there is no Count Del Parso, I, Cosmo di Siccardoli, am, by royal warrant of Joanna the Second of Naples, the peer of any man, count, baron or prince, that may stand on the soil of Del Parso. I am bound, and cannot use my hands, Lord Colonna; but within my doublet thy grace mayst find the parchment by which I hold my office, with right to administer judgment as lord of Del Parso. Take the parchment from my bosom, Vittoria, and give it to his grace. I have not seen fit to flaunt my secret authority in the faces of the people and magistrates of this village of Del Parso—they are a peaceful and honest people, and have for twenty years ruled

themselves and their interests well without a count; and, during the ten years that I have owned that royal warrant, there has been no occasion to speak of it."

The prince, to whom Vittoria had given a roll of parchment she had drawn from her father's doublet, read carefully its contents, and then said to the count:

"He speaks truly. By this warrant he is temporary count and lord of this province. It gives him the right to administer justice, even to ordering criminals to execution! As Count of Del Parso he is empowered with authority to try all criminals for crimes committed on the soil of Del Parso, and to pardon or sentence them, even to instant execution, in all cases in which the criminal shall not be of legitimate noble birth. See here! the signature of the queen! countersigned by our father, the grand constable! here the great seal of the kingdom!"

The count turned pale as he glared at the parchment.

"Reads it—'of legitimate noble birth'?" he asked.

"Read it for thyself," replied the prince, holding the parchment and indicating with his forefinger the words:

"And said Cosmo di Siccardoli, temporary Count Del Parso, is hereby clothed and empowered with all the rights and privileges of a sovereign prince within the limits of our province Del Parso, including the right to sentence to capital punishment all criminals guilty of capital crimes committed on the soil of Del Parso—criminals of legitimate noble birth alone excepted."

"By right of that royal warrant!" here exclaimed Cosmo, in a loud voice, "I claim to be the Count Del Parso, and demand to be set free of these bonds. And I call on ye, nobles of Naples," he added, turning his face toward the now greatly interested and much amazed followers of the prince, "to witness that I, Cosmo di Siccardoli, make this demand as sovereign lord of Del Parso and peer of any here."

"And, being free, and recognized as chief on this soil," said the prince, gravely, "what then?"

"By the ancient law of Del Parso, still in force," replied the brave old man, his burning gaze fixed on Lord Alfrasco, "Alfrasco of Zapponezzo, being not of legitimate noble birth, falls, by reason of the crime he meditated against the peace and honour of a virtuous maiden, under that sentence of condemnation which demands that his right hand shall be smitten off at the wrist by any executioner the Lord Del Parso may appoint. Thus it is if the maiden assailed be of noble birth, or of a parentage made noble by royal warrant, the matter comes not to cutting off of hands but of heads. Yet, as Alfrasco of Zapponezzo hath the blood of the Caraccioli in his veins, and is a son of the grand constable—and the favourite son, though illegitimate, of his excellency—and hath a brother in whose face I read something noble—he shall remain a prisoner in the jail of Atrani until such time as her majesty may see fit to release him."

"Old fox," thought the count, as even his bold eyes sank beneath the fiery stare of Cosmo, "if ever I be cast into a dungeon within Del Parso, and in thy power, thou wouldst take horrible revenge upon me, and say that I had died in prison."

"Pish!" here said the old man, as the prince remained silent. "Ye two are Caracciolis, and these are your sycophants! Free me and begone from Del Parso, all of ye, and it shall be my care to see that no Gia Petti prowls again near my home, whether I see fit to dwell in a cottage or in the old Castle Del Parso. Set me free, and permit me and my daughter to depart. We wish to have naught to do with nobles or princes."

"This parchment," said the prince, "bears a date that is ten years old."

"'Tis as good and strong as if 'twere just signed, so long as there be no more recent royal warrant to supersede the authority therein granted to me, Lord Colonna," replied the old man, haughtily. "For the indignity put upon me I ask no satisfaction, as ye have acted thus not knowing me to be temporary Count of Del Parso. Free me, and depart from my province."

"All that thou seest here," said the prince, gravely, "are the sworn friends and followers of myself or the Count of Zapponezzo. What is to prevent us from hanging thee to yonder tree, and keeping all this as securely a secret as thou hast held secret in thy own bosom this hidden authority of thine?"

"One may keep a secret, my lord. Aught within the knowledge of a score ceases to be a secret," replied Cosmo, calmly. "Thou mayst hang me, and so shalt thy lawless brother in the villany he meditated, but the act will be high treason and an insult to the crown—information of which will some day reach the queen, or thy enemies—"

"Pah! make an end of the old dotard!" exclaimed the count. "Thou art so fair in the queen's favour that were her majesty ever to hear of the matter she would still smile on thee. 'Tis a pity thou hast not with thee thy royal warrant to be Count Del Parso."

"I have it," replied the prince, calmly, drawing a roll of parchment from his bosom. "Cosmo di Siccardoli, this parchment, dated and signed two weeks ago, constitutes me Count Del Parso—not temporarily, but for life, and with the right to bequeath at my death, or to delegate during my life the sovereign rule of this province to whom it may please me. Read."

The old man ran his keen eyes over the parchment as the prince held it up before him for his perusal, and then, turning a woeful gaze upon his daughter, said:

"Would to Heaven, my child, that my hands were for an instant free and armed, for then I might save thee from the brutality of these Caracciolis as Virginus saved his fair daughter in ancient Rome."

Then in a tone meant only for Vittoria's ear he said:

"Thy hands are free; thou art brave. Use thy courage. The prince hath a dagger hanging loosely in its sheath—kneel to him in feigned outcry—pluck the dagger from its sheath and plunge it deep into thy heart—for there is no mercy for maidens in these accursed Caracciolis! Act!"

Instantly, though as pale as death and with an icy horror chilling her young blood to the coldness of utter despair, Vittoria threw herself on her knees at the feet of the prince.

All her life she had been a most obedient child to her parents. To her mother was a saint to be adored; her father to be loved and obeyed.

She now knelt at the foot of the prince only to find or make an opportunity to snatch his dagger from its golden sheath and plunge it to the jewelled hilt in her breast.

"Noble sir!" she began, with her fair hands upraised, and almost touching his belt, "My lord, be merciful to my poor old father—ha!"

A movement of the prince had swung the hilt of the dagger, as it dangled by a silver chain from his belt, within her reach.

As she cried "ha!" her right hand clutched the hilt of the weapon.

"Ha!" cried the voice of the count at the same instant, as with a gesture as rapid as lightning, and a grip like living steel, his right hand grasped that of Vittoria.

His keen eye, intelligent as that of a fiend to understand meditated violence, had noted the glance of Cosmo at the dagger of the prince as the agonized father whispered to the maiden, and the shudder that for an instant shook her frame as her eye flashed toward the same weapon ere she sprang from her father's side to kneel to the prince.

Fiend in soul, yet the count comprehended the motive which prompted the spotless maiden to self-immolation, and his strong grasp was upon hers ere she could pluck the dagger from its sheath.

"See! She meant to stab thee to the heart, my brother!" cried the count, as he held the hand of the maiden imprisoned in his cruel clutch, his black eyes flaming with malicious exultation.

"'Tis false!" exclaimed Cosmo, shuddering with rage and despair for his baffled child. "She intended no harm to the peachy-cheeked Caracciolis, but death to herself rather than dishonour!"

"Thou didst not aim to stab me, Vittoria?" asked the prince, calmly, as he freed her hand from that of the count, who fell back a pace, shrugging his shoulders.

"Nay—but to stab myself!"

"Poor child! All the Caracciolis are not monsters," said the prince. "There, go stand near thy father, and fear not that I shall be a tyrant to thee, nor to him. Now, old man, state thy grievances in this matter. But that I fear thy rash nature may lead thee to some deed of violence ere my judgment can be pronounced I would free thy arms. Wilt pledge thy word of honour not to act unseemly if I free thy arms, old man?"

In the tone of the prince as he used the appellation of "old man" toward Cosmo there was no air of contempt or haughtiness, but a signification of grave respect and even reverence for the white hair and snowy beard of the heroic forester.

"Can there be justice in a Caraccioli?" asked Cosmo, coldly.

"Unbind him, Borrelli, that his arms may embrace his daughter," commanded the prince, with a noble air.

With a slash from his dagger Borrelli cut the cords that held Cosmo's arms, and the old man drew Vittoria to his bosom with one arm, whirled himself and her by a rapid and unexpected movement of immense strength and wonderful activity so as to place his

back against the circular basin at the feet of the statue of San Antonio—his other hand sweeping the dagger from Borrelli's grasp at the same instant.

"Now, lords!" cried Cosmo, as he confronted all with the dagger upraised. "Tis left to me to play Virginius yet."

"Cosmo! Husband! harm not our child!" here shrieked Donna Castelletta, who at this moment rushed from the forest.

The anxious wife and mother had made what speed she could from the moment the reader saw her spring from her knees at the cottage; but weak and agitated and not used to long running, she had not been able to arrive at the fountain-green until at the moment above, and with all her strength spent she sank upon her knees with her hands over her face, and her face to the ground.

"Tis my wife, Caraccioli! Thou seest how we peasants can love each other—and honour!" said Cosmo, sternly. "Make but one movement toward me, any of ye, and by Heaven my daughter dies!"

"Nay, rash man! harm not thy child, nor thyself," replied the prince, eagerly. "State thy grievances and I swear by the cross to deal justly."

So saying the prince kissed the hilt of his dagger.

"I have heard," said Cosmo, "that Colonna Caraccioli was unlike all others of his name, and yet he has a face wonderfully like Alfrasco of Zaponnetto. Yet I will speak to him. Thy brother, my lord—the man near thee, the Count of Zaponnetto, hath of late prowled near my dwelling, as a wolf prowls near a sheep fold, in the disguise of an honest vinedresser, and calling himself Gia Petti. He meant to deceive my daughter with fair and false promises. He failed—he saw through his deceit and scorned him—as all honest men and women should scorn him. He meant to make her his prey by violence, or what hath passed at this fountain would not have been. I came upon the scene suddenly, as is known. If thou, Colonna Caraccioli, wert not aiding him in his evil design appearances so tell me—"

"Nay, old man, I had no thought in the matter," interrupted the prince, quickly, "until the screams of thy daughter led me hither. I arrived here but a few moments before thy bolt struck the count."

"No more do I know, my lord," said Cosmo, sternly.

"What hast thou, Lord Alfrasco, to say in answer to this?" demanded the prince.

"I? Nothing!" replied the count, haughtily. "Shall I stoop to pit my word with that of a peasant?"

"And thy mother," burst from the lips of the outraged father, "was a peasant's wife, and her husband not thy father! There's thy pride, man, in being a Caraccioli out of wedlock!"

"By St. Jude!" cried the count, starting forward.

But the prince threw himself in his way, and exclaimed:

"I am lord here—and thou a criminal!"

"Ha! this from thy lips!" cried the count, as the followers of the prince came rushing about them with drawn swords. "Manfredi! Borrelli! Servitors! Rescue!"

But the ruffian retainers of the count dared not draw their swords upon ten young nobles, all of the first families of Naples, led by the legitimate son of the grand constable, and they fell back in sullen silence; while their master, seeing the folly of resistance, snatched his sword on his knee and threw the fragments at the foot of the prince, exclaiming:

"I appeal in this matter to the judgment of Ser Gianni Caraccioli, Grand Constable of Naples."

"There can be no appeal from the sovereignty of the Count Del Parsò," replied the prince, coldly. "Alfrasco, my brother, I cannot forget that thy father is my father, or, by Heaven, the penalty of the ancient law of Del Parsò should fall upon thy right hand. I knew not till now that thou wouldst draw thy sword upon me—"

"Forgive me, brother," said the count, with sudden, well-simulated contrition.

"Ay, and I meant not to be too severe—a too severe judge on thee, Alfrasco," continued the prince. "As thy evil purpose toward yon maiden has failed, for this time I pardon thee."

"And he swore to be just," muttered Cosmo, in his beard.

"Dear father, say nothing more to anger them!" whispered Vittoria, trembling, for the dagger in her father's hand still gleamed fearfully in her eyes.

"They are Caraccioli! my curse upon them!" muttered the old forester.

"Father! Oh, Heaven!" ejaculated Vittoria, whispering in his ear, and shuddering. "Cast thy eyes but for an instant to the right—at the thicket behind mother as she kneels."

"Nay! I must keep my eyes on these nobles," replied Cosmo. "They are fiends! How do I know that all this sputter is not gotten up for a chance to disarm me ere I can use my dagger? What seest thou in the thicket behind thy mother? Ha! I see! The brigand! Rizzio di Sicardo!"

(To be continued.)

THE HEIRESS OF CLANRONALD.

CHAPTER XL.

It was late in October, a bright, warm day, all the royal oaks about the grand old Manor clad in raset gold, and the misty sunlight flooding the broad park, and cresting the ripples on the river, and making the quaint diamond windows in the tall turrets flash and glitter as if set with jewels.

It was the morning of Miss Ryhope's ball. On that bright October day she was just seventeen, and the ball was to be in honour of the occasion. Lady Ryhope had spared no expense to make the affair a success, and all the best county families and numerous acquaintances from London were invited.

"My dear," said her ladyship, speaking to her daughter, as they came up the great oak stairs from lunch, "will you come into my room presently? I have something to say to you."

"I'll go now, mamma, if you like," said May, dashing up the slippery steps, her blonde curls all in a shimmer.

Lady Ryhope led the way to her boudoir and thence into a dressing-room beyond. It was very dark, the curtains all down, and one object scarcely distinguishable from another.

"Sit down," commanded her ladyship, and May obeyed, sinking into a velvet-lined chair with a strange sensation of fear and amazement.

"Mamma," she faltered, "why have you brought me into this dark place? What are you going to do?"

"To show you your bridal garments," replied her mother, quietly. "Look there!"

She drew back a heavy velvet curtain as she spoke, and let in the bright sunshine. Miss Ryhope stared for an instant, and then uttered a cry of admiration. Before her astonished eye, ranged in glittering files across the panelled wall, were robes of every tint and fabric—silks, and tissues, and crisp muslins, sky blue and glossy violet, and purest white, and a bridal robe that glistened like a mass of snow, with laces of gossamer fineness, and a long veil, embroidered in the most exquisite design, and surmounted by a tiara of gems that blazed like newly risen stars.

"My daughter," said Lady Laura, quietly, "these are your bridal robes, and this day will see you a bride and Countess of Shaftonsbury."

Something in her mother's face and calm, cruel eyes thrilled the poor girl with terror. She arose to her feet, trembling in every limb, and glanced furtively toward the door. Her mother saw the glance, and she arose without a word, and proceeded to lock the door and to put the key in her pocket.

"I have arranged everything," she continued, turning again and facing her daughter, with that cold, resolute look. "Your engagement has been published in the Court papers, the necessary preliminaries settled, the guests are bidden, the minister is ready, and your bridegroom is here. Nothing remains for you to do but to obey my commands, as a dutiful daughter should, and spare me the pain of forcing you."

"Why, mamma," the astonished girl broke out, "what are you talking about? Are you losing your mind? or am I in a dream? I never will be married to Lord Shaftonsbury."

"We shall see, my love," returned the haughty lady. "Don't be disobedient; 'tis vulgar and ill bred, and it involves such disagreeable necessities. Sit down and look over your pretty things. The queen's daughter could not have a more handsome trousseau. In an hour I will return. Till then, my pet, good-bye."

And with a mocking, cruel smile, and that determined look in her eyes, she swept out of the room, closing and locking the door after her.

May was left alone, shut up with her glittering bridal array. She turned from one marvellous robe to another with a wide, half-stupid gaze. The glimmer of the jewels blinded her; the faint odour of violets that pervaded the room thrilled her like subtle poison. Was she the victim of a horrible dream?

She sprang to her feet with a dim fancy that she would awake and find it all the foolish chimera of her brain; but the glistening robes did not vanish, and the precious stones blinked like wicked eyes in the semi-gloom.

She ran to the door, and found it secure—to the windows, tearing away their silken hangings; but, to her unutterable horror, she perceived that they were firmly fastened down. She was a prisoner,

locked up with those mocking robes, the garments of her sacrifice.

A wild terror took possession of her. She shook at the massive door, and beat against the heavy windows, till her delicate hands were all bruised; but no one came to her rescue. In a few minutes, however, this paroxysm subsided. She grew calm, and sat down to think.

The October morning was rapidly waning, but presently, in his handsome carriage, with its liveried groom, the Earl of Shaftonsbury drove up the broad avenue that approached the Manor.

The poor girl shivered with disgust. Of all men in the wide world she disliked him most; and in a few moments they would force her to become his wife. From her infancy her mother had ruled her with a rod of iron, and poor little May stood dreadfully in awe of her. The thought of defying her commands and opposing her will filled her with fright.

"Oh, what shall I do?" she wailed, beginning to sob, and rock herself to and fro in her old, childish fashion; "I am no match for mamma; she'll be sure to have her way—she always does. Why didn't I run away while I was free and had a chance? Where is Daisy, I wonder? and Matih! Will no one help me?"

Through the distant openings of the beech grove the ivied chimneys and mossy roofs of Beechwood Hall were visible. With her face pressed against the glass poor little May could see the blue smoke curling up in the distance, and catch a glimpse of the young squire's broad acres of golden grain.

Only a day or two before, down in the seclusion of Hazel Glen, one of Miss Ryhope's favourite haunts, she had met Squire Renshawe; not by appointment certainly—Miss Ryhope was guilty of no such indiscretion as that. The meeting was purely accidental.

Miss Ryhope was gathering ferns, and Mr. Renshawe was taking a solitary walk, when the fates brought them face to face.

But the tall young squire of Beechwood Hall would have been irresolute indeed to suffer such an opportunity to slip by, when for a twelvemonth an avowal of love had been trembling on his tongue every time he met the baronet's daughter.

He gathered her ferns, and then he told his story, the old sweet story that all maidens love to hear; told it in a manly and simple manner, in keeping with his simple, unaffected nature. Pretty little Miss Ryhope listened, with every nerve in her body thrilling with delight, but when the story was ended she tossed her yellow curls and shrugged her dimpled shoulders.

"Oh, Mr. Renshawe," she said, with pretty perversity, "why will you be so stupid and tiresome, and talk such silly nonsense? Please don't! Care for you? Of course not!" her silver laughter filling the eyrie glen with musical echoes. "I wonder that you should dream of anything so absurd—I like my freedom too well to care for you or any other man, Mr. Renshawe!"

And the great, good fellow, too simple to see through this feminine artifice, had bidden her adieu and taken himself out of her presence, hurt and disappointed to the very core of his honest heart.

May thought of it now, sitting there in the grand gloom of her bridal chamber, and watching the blue smoke curling up from the young squire's chimneys, and her tears fell like April rain. Would he help her if she ran away and went to him she wondered? But the thought covered her cheeks with deep blushes. No matter what befell her, she could not go to him. But she would die—die, and go to her grave, before they should make her the earl's wife.

She was rising to her feet again, nerved by this resolution, when the door opened and Lady Ryhope and the Duchess of Clydesdale entered.

The duchess was in full dress, brocade that rustled as she walked, priceless old point, and diamonds fit for a queen's diadem.

She advanced to May's side, and stooped to kiss her cheek.

"Let me congratulate you, my little countess," she said, pleasantly.

The child shrank away from her kiss, as if the touch of the haughty old lips burned her.

"Oh, Lady Clydesdale," she cried, "don't say such dreadful things—I shall never be a countess."

The duchess smiled, a chill, severe smile, and her handsome, well-preserved face showed no touch of pity for the young creature, looking up with frightened eyes, like some lovely wild animal at bay.

Lady Clydesdale had her own unspoken reasons for siding so strongly with Lady Ryhope in bringing about this marriage. The Earl of Shaftonsbury was her brother, but there was some one nearer to her than the earl, her son, her only child, her idol, the handsome marquis, heir to the Dukedom of Clydesdale. And the marquis was hopelessly in love with this self-same, silly little May. His mother's lynx eyes had detected it, almost before the young man was aware of his own feelings. And May Ry-

hope, though the old duchess liked the child excessively, was not the kind of woman the Dukes of Clydesdale had been wont to marry; her pedigree was not long enough, her mother's conduct was too dubious—she would not do at all for the marquis.

The earl, Lady Clydesdale's brother, was quite another person. He was old and blasé, and too fond of his cups, and his revenues were pretty well exhausted, and at his death, even if he died without heirs, none of his estates would accrue to the marquis. Hence the duchess, who was a very diplomatic woman in her way, considered it just the thing for the earl to marry May. It would put her effectually out of the way of the marquis, and, moreover, a young and pretty wife would keep the earl out of disgraceful intrigues, and give new prestige and interest to Shaftonsbury Court.

Having taken all these points into consideration, and concluded that the marriage was advisable, the duchess set herself to work to bring it about; and it was in obedience to her suggestion that all the preparations had been carried on in secret. She bestowed upon May a cold, quiet smile.

"I don't consider it so very dreadful to be a countess, my dear," she said, "and in three months' time, when you are mistress of Shaftonsbury Court, I think you will agree that I am right. Come, looking at her jewelled watch, 'tis quite time we were setting about your toilet."

Lady Ryhope advanced with Tulip at her elbow. "My dear," she said, pleasantly, "Matthi is unwell this morning and Tulip must dress you. Come, Tulip, arrange your young lady's hair, and do your best. She will be a bride to-day, and a bride should always be beautiful."

The woman advanced to do her lady's bidding, but before she had touched one of Miss Ryhope's flossy curls she bounded from her chair with a stifled cry.

"I won't be dressed—and I won't be married to-day—go away. Tulip, do not touch me," she cried. Lady Ryhope was by her side by the time the words had passed her lips.

"Hush," she said, in a low, sibilant voice, grasping the girl's wrist till she could have cried out with pain, "do you dare tell me you won't? I am your mother and I say you shall marry the earl this morning! Tulip, proceed at once with Miss Ryhope's toilet."

Once again the well-trained maid, bought soul and body into her lady's service, advanced with an ivory brush in her hand. Poor little May was trembling like a leaf, but she put out both her hands and pushed her off with all her might.

"Go away, Tulip; I will not be dressed." The duchess was laying out the bridal garments, interspersing her work with little nods and exclamations of admiration. She turned, at this juncture, and made a swift gesture to Lady Ryhope.

The latter nodded significantly in answer. "It will save trouble," she said, taking a small crystal bottle from the bosom of her dress and removing the stopper.

A lace handkerchief lay upon the table, she caught it up and poured the contents of the bottle over it. Then, while May stood panting, her blue eyes wide with horror, her mother threw the lace trifle over her face and held it there.

In a minute's time the girl began to sink, her knees gave way beneath her, her arms fell limp and useless at her side, and her golden head fell back across her mother's arm. She proceeded to place her in the great chair before the toilet mirror.

"Now, Tulip," she said, serenely, "you may dress Miss Ryhope without trouble."

"How well it works," remarked the duchess, looking up from the bridal veil she was arranging, "a priceless drug when one has a refractory subject to deal with."

Tulip went steadily to work, brushing out the gleaming golden curls, putting on the priceless lace and linen, fitting the dainty satin shoes to the pretty, quiet feet. And all the while May lay back in the great chair with its royal velvet linings, unable to move hand or foot, and yet intensely conscious. The subtle narcotic had deprived her of all power to resist, but it seemed to have rendered all her mental faculties preternaturally acute. Her eyes were wide open, and watched, with a piteously impotent despair, everything that was going on.

Not a word was spoken; the silence of death reigned in this grand and glittering chamber while poor May was being robbed for the sacrifice—the saddest sacrifice of girlish beauty and innocence that human eyes ever beheld.

In the broad, low hall, hung with suits of quaint armour and grim portraits of dead-and-gone Ryhopes, Lord Shaftonsbury was pacing up and down.

His florid face looked a trifle pale in the dim light, and he watched the great black staircase with a glance half-savage in its eagerness. He was watching for his bride, the bride that should be his whether she willed it or not, as a tiger in the jungle might watch for its prey.

And presently, fling down the broad black staircase, came a glittering cortège, headed by the haughty old duchess. The bride, looking like a fair lily in her gleaming white garments, was leaning heavily on her mother's arm, a strange, white, deathly look in her young face, a wide, wild, agonized stare in her blue eyes, that reminded one of the awful look of a somnambulist.

Following after came a shining train of white-robed bridesmaids, all bearing white favours in their hands.

"The priest awaits us, and we will have the marriage well over, and give our guests a surprise when they arrive," whispered Lady Ryhope to the earl.

The old chapel was in the western wing of the Manor; years before it had been a gorgeous temple, and it had been the custom with the Ryhope baronets to celebrate their marriages and christen their heirs within its sacred cloisters. But of late it had fallen into disuse and decay.

But toward this old chapel the bridal party now bent their steps.

The western wing of the Manor House was but little used and seldom entered, and the dim corridors and musty apartments, through which this strange and solemn procession made its way, were dark and dusty. The glimmer of a taper guided them to the entrance of the chapel.

Lady Ryhope had laid her plans well. If May could be coaxed or frightened into obedience she meant to have a public wedding in the great drawing-room in the sight of all her guests. But if she resisted and was at all troublesome she would quiet her with that subtle Eastern drug which the duchess had picked up in some of her foreign travels and have the ceremony performed in the silence of the ruined chapel. Once the earl's wife, Lady Ryhope had no fears for her daughter. He, the most noble earl, was just the kind of man to tame and subdue a refractory bride.

And then his own interest would keep him silent; he would not care to injure the brother of the woman who was his own wife! Her son's secret would be safe! Her devotion to Sir Eustace was this haughty, heartless woman's one redeeming quality. To spare him pain or dishonour she would have stooped to any crime.

The door of the old chapel stood wide open. The earl entered, and Lady Ryhope and May and the duchess, and the white-robed bridesmaids followed.

From behind the marble altar, above which a holy Madonna smiled down in serene loveliness, a black-robed priest arose and stood in waiting.

The earl advanced, his usually florid face pale with determination, his dull eyes flickering with a triumphant light.

"Your reverence may proceed," spake the silvery voice of Lady Ryhope as the attendants fell into their places, and the hiring priest, bribed with untold gold to do the unholy work, began the solemn ceremony.

Supported by the earl and her mother poor little May, as she said in after years, was keenly conscious of everything that went on; yet she lacked the power to utter a single word, or even so much as to lift a finger in protest. And the horrible sacrifice went on. The holy words were being spoken that would make her for all time the earl's wife.

There was no one to interfere. Lady Ryhope had looked to that. The servants were busy, Miss Doon had been sent into Ryhope on business, and Sir Eustace was galloping home from Bathurst Green, where he had dined with Colonel Fitzroy and some dozen young officers from the barracks.

The silence in the old chapel was like that of a tomb, and no living soul was near to save the hapless girl from this most unholy sacrifice.

The ceremony was nearly over, and the earl was in the act of slipping the wedding-ring upon the white finger of his bride. But the touch of his hand seemed to thrill her into sudden life. She uttered a faint, gasping cry and tore her hand away. The costly ring fell and went tinkling and glittering across the marble floor; and in the same breath a secret door or entrance of some kind slid slowly open on the right-hand side of the altar.

"Hold!" cried a hollow and unearthly voice.

The priest paused in consternation, the earl stared in speechless amaze, and Lady Ryhope uttered a cry that those who heard never forgot.

There, in the dusky aperture, stood Sir Roger Ryhope, the dead-and-buried baronet, tall, white, ghastly, looking at them with an awful gaze that curdled the blood in their veins.

Lady Ryhope did not faint, but, still shrieking wildly, ran headlong from the chapel, and the terror-stricken bridesmaids followed her.

But the shock, the awful cry of her mother or some subtle consciousness that baffles human wisdom, had wrought an instantaneous change in Miss Ryhope. She stood erect, all her powers of motion suddenly restored, and stared for one brief instant at the awful vision before her. Then she uttered a quick and most pathetic cry.

"Oh, papa, dearest papa, did you come back from Heaven to save me?"

Extending both her arms, she darted forward. The unearthly apparition caught and clasped her, the aperture closed slowly as it had opened, and the dead baronet and his daughter both disappeared.

CHAPTER XLI.

At the same hour in which these awful events were taking place Daisy was hurrying along the rural lane that led from Ryhope village to the Manor.

Lady Clydesdale had sent her down for ribbons and flowers, and Daisy had overstayed her time, chatting with Miss Lottie Lovel, from whom she bought them.

The sun was high, and all the russet Durham hills and the yellow oaks were in a blaze of glory. The air was crisp and fresh, and her rapid walk had brought a vivid glow to the girl's cheeks and a brilliant sparkle to her eyes. She was happy too, as young things of seventeen summers will be, in anticipation of Miss Ryhope's ball.

She seemed born for a life of pleasure and luxury, this pretty, dark-eyed Daisy; she could no more help her love for such things than a spotted butterfly could refrain from sporting in the summer sunshine.

She was thinking of the charming dress that Miss Ryhope had given her, and wondering if she would have plenty of time to dress, as she hurried along beneath the whispering beech boughs, and fancying how splendid it would be to dance as much as she liked in the great velvet-hung dancing-hall with the handsomest young squires in Durham for her partners.

Don't think she was heartless, this queenly girl of ours—on the contrary, her heart was tenderness itself. In the very midst of these silly dreams she paused to look at the sunset on the Wear, and somehow it suggested the far-away sea, and the sea made her think of Jack.

Her black eyes brimmed over, and her scarlet mouth quivered. Poor Jack, lying cold and dead beneath the cruel waves, and she to think of dancing! She made a passionate gesture, and registered an inward vow that she would not dance, no matter who asked her; for Jack's sake she would forego the pleasure.

And just in this moment of tender pain the clatter of hoofs startled her, and she turned to see Sir Eustace on his pet Arab. He leaped from his saddle in a twinkling.

"I was thinking of you this moment, dearest," he said, "and you appear in my pathway like the good angel that you are! Where have you been roaming? and what do all those mysterious parcels contain?"

"Ribbons and pansies for the duchess," replied Daisy. "She sent me shopping, and I've overstayed my time. I must run now, or such a scolding as I shall get. Why, the ball will be beginning before I get there."

"The ball beginning, and here it's barely noon," laughed the baronet. "Oh, you simple little rustic, I must teach you the customs of the fashionable world. Nay, you're not to leave me yet. I won't suffer it. I've just as much right to your time as the duchess, and, besides, I've something to tell you."

He drew her hand within his arm, and they walked slowly along, the Arab following in their steps.

"I've been dining with Fitzroy, at Bathurst Green," he continued, "and Lord Raeburn was one of the guests. I spoke to him about that Clanronald affair, and he looked a good deal flustered; but I could get nothing out of him. He's a sharp villain, but I'll bring him to terms, Daisy, if I do it at the dagger's point."

"Oh, Sir Eustace, don't say such dreadful things!" she cried, "I would not have you get in trouble about it for the world."

He laughed and patted her brilliant cheek.

"I'm so glad you have my interest at heart," he said. "And now I've a favour to ask. I'm like a child—I want my pay before my task's done," with a bewildering smile. "I want you to marry me, Daisy—to marry me at once, and give me the right to take all these matters into my own hands. Will you, darling?"

She looked at him with soft, shy eyes. His face was so handsome, so alluring.

"I dare not promise, Sir Eustace," she replied, "for it is likely that I should run away from you again, as I did in London."

"Ah, my birdie," he answered, gaily, "I'll never give you the chance again. I mean to keep fast hold of you till you are my own, own wife; and you will be mine at once, and then we will work together for Ichabod's interest. Don't you see, when you are my wife Raeburn will see that you never can be his, confound him, and he'll resign the whole thing at once. Why, dearest, 'tis the surest way to conquer him."

Approaching footsteps, crushing through the thicket near by, startled them.

"I must go," cried Daisy, tearing away her hand, and darting down the winding path with one shy, backward glance that filled the young baronet with eager delight.

"I'll have her yet," he murmured, looking after her, "the beautiful, provoking creature; but all that Clanronald romance is of Lamonte's own making—I don't believe a word of it. No, my pretty Daisy, you are nothing more than a shoemaker's grandchild, but I would make you my wife to-morrow rather than lose you for ever. What a deuce of a row there would be, I suppose, if I did marry her! Well, well," the ugly look creeping back, and utterly changing his handsome face, "Vanburgh would do the job right enough, if I could only get her back to London, and on the whole 'twould be better than marriage! Pah! the thought of a wife sickens me!"

While the young lord of the Manor stood under the beech boughs thus ruminating Daisy hurried on to the Manor.

In the hall a scene of dire confusion greeted her. Servants were running hither and thither in pallid dismay, and on the carpet of the grand drawing-room lay Lady Ryhope in strong convulsions. Not ten paces off one of the white-robed bridesmaids lay in a dead swoon, and the others were huddled together in a corner like a covey of frightened birds.

"Why, what on earth has happened?" cried Daisy, standing still on the threshold, her ribbons and pansies crushed in her hands. "Good people, what is the matter?"

Matihl hearing her voice came flying up, gestulating and talking as only an excited French woman can.

"'Tis all about Miss Ryhope," she screeched, her sharp black eyes burning like sparks of fire; "I thought there was something wrong when I was kept away from her all day, and they've been trying to marry her to the earl, and she in a fainting fit and not able to stand. A crying shame, and I'll say it to Lady Ryhope's face, a young bit of a child like Miss May. And now she's gone," she added, wringing her hands and beginning to sob hysterically; "the ghost of the dead baronet appeared and carried her off bodily, and no one knows where she is."

"Oh, Matihl," cried Daisy, "you are losing your wits—do not talk such nonsense, I beg of you. Ladies," turning to the affrighted, white-robed maidens, "will one of you tell me what has happened?"

"She tells you the truth," said one, the daughter of an old county family. "'Tis so—Miss Ryhope was at the altar, and we were her bridesmaids, you know!"

"No, I beg your pardon, but I do not know, interrupted Daisy, petulantly. "I thought Miss Ryhope was to have a ball. I heard nothing of a wedding. She was at the altar, you say?"

"At the altar in the old chapel, in the western wing," replied the blue-eyed county girl, with a shuddering glance over her white shoulder, and coming closer to Daisy's side. "Is it possible you know nothing of it? It was a strange wedding altogether, I think," lowering her voice, and glancing across to where Lady Ryhope lay, her face like the ghastly face of a dead woman. "I think Miss Ryhope must have objected quite strongly, but Lady Ryhope said it was all right, and we followed her down to the old chapel, and the ceremony was almost over, and the earl was putting the ring on the bride's finger, when a door or something opened all at once behind the altar, and—oh! oh! I can't—I shall never forget the sight till the hour I die—oh! oh!"

She broke into little feminine shrieks, and covered her face with her hands.

Miss Doon, tall and dark and calm, turned from her in undisguised disgust.

"It would be a pity for any more people to faint," she said, dryly. "Matihl," turning again to the French maid, who was hovering near, "I want to know where Miss Ryhope is—can you tell me?"

"Oh, cœil, mam'selle, don't you hear?" shrieked Matihl; "the ghost of the baronet has carried her off, and they can't find her—the earl's been running over the grounds like a madman, but she is gone!"

Daisy's dusky eyes began to dilate. "Oh, if I could hear the truth!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands. "Oh, Heavens, look at her ladyship—she's in convulsions—has any one been sent for a physician?"

"Yes, a quarter of an hour ago," responded another one of the bridesmaids, "and I can tell you the truth if you want to hear."

"I wish you would, miss!"

"I saw the door behind the altar slide open," she went on, "I saw Sir Roger Ryhope as plain as I see you. He stood an instant and cried 'Hold!' I saw him, I tell you, Miss Doon," she repeated, with

a defiant flash at Daisy's incredulous face, "white and awful, just like a dead man. Lady Ryhope saw him too, and uttered a shriek that I shall never forget. All of us rushed to the door, but Miss Ryhope put out her hands and cried:

"Oh, papa, have you come from Heaven to save me?"

"I heard her cry, and looked back as I ran, and she was in the dead baronet's arms, and no one has seen her since. That's the story, Miss Doon!"

Daisy bowed gravely and walked away, never even glancing toward the couch on which Lady Ryhope lay.

She went straight through the gloom and dust to the old chapel in the western wing.

"They're all scared out of their senses," she thought, and she made her way through the windy corridors. "Poor May is in the old chapel, no doubt, where they've left her. I'll solve the mystery if there's any to solve. I did see Sir Roger's face once myself, or fancied I did," with a feeling of terror which she strove in vain to repress, "but I don't think his ghost would have any enmity against me, and I am not afraid to face it."

Daisy had reached the old chapel by this time, and her fresh young face was growing ashy white, and her lithe, elastic limbs trembled, in spite of her brave, strong will. It was as silent as the grave, and a damp, death-like atmosphere half stifled her as she entered.

"May! Miss Ryhope!" she cried.

But there came no response.

Daisy ascended the steps and passed beyond the altar, but there was no trace of Miss Ryhope or her ghostly father.

The girl's heart beat hard against her bodice, and her hands shook, but she would not give up. She began to pass her fingers over the marble slabs beyond the altar, and at last she touched a tiny silver knob. She pressed hard upon it and it yielded, and the secret door slid slowly open. A black abyss yawned within; and Daisy, excited into a kind of desperate daring, plunged in.

A flight of narrow, dizzy steps led downward, and she followed them, down, down, till the air was thick and close. At last she saw a faint glimmer in the distance.

It was an open door, and it led out into the grounds beyond the western wing. Daisy was keenly disappointed. She had counted so on finding Miss Ryhope, and she had failed.

(To be continued.)

ENCOURAGEMENT.

ENCOURAGEMENT works wonders with almost anybody, no matter what his occupation in life may be. A boy likes to be encouraged, so does a girl; a man likes it, also a woman, and even the old grandfather and grandmother have a relish for it.

Some parents often make a mistake in not giving their children credit when they do a thing well, and some unintentionally let a lesson that has been studied very hard, or a piece of work that has been well done, by a boy or girl, pass by without the least notice. This discourages a child, and has a bad effect otherwise.

Encouragement puts new life in a child, especially if it be bestowed by a parent. Yet there are people who, though anxious to have their children do well, are continually, and in a dispiriting way, telling them that they shouldn't do so and so, and that that is wrong, etc., without ever having a little friendly talk with them, and giving them good advice, and encouraging them when they do right.

Some parents also make a mistake in leaving the education of their children wholly to schools. They think if they send their children to school, and pay their way, that they—the parents—are doing their part, and that the children should do theirs. This may work very well with good boys, but with the careless, the thoughtless, and the indifferent it does not work well.

THE DEATH SHADOW OF THE MIAMI.

CHAPTER VIII.

A day, an hour of virtuous liberty
Is worth an eternity of bondage. Addison.

WHEN Morning Star parted with the villain whom she had learned to love, at the close of their interview at the foot of the cliffs, it was with far different thoughts and intentions in her mind than those which he supposed dwelt there.

In her own heart she felt sure that he had become enamoured of the paleface maiden, and would not fulfil the promise he had made of bringing her to the village on the morrow, to be consigned to the death-lodge, and then to a death at the stake at the harvest feast.

She felt sure that he was deceiving her, and that the white maiden would be taken to his heart, and so usurp the place she had so long filled, and she determined that he should be foiled in his plans.

Unknown to him she had long possessed the secret of his hiding-place.

Strong and secure as he had thought it, she had many times stood within its walls. She had learned how to undo the fastenings to the door which he had contrived, and with a knowledge of the entrance to the secret passage could enter and leave it at will.

This knowledge would now serve her purpose well. She would call him again from the cavern when the darkness had set in, and when he returned again the white maiden should be gone. Then he might think that his captive had in some way made her escape in his absence and could not lay the disappearance to her charge.

But in her heart the squaw said that the white maiden should die.

With her own hand she would take her life, and then her rival would be forever removed out of her path.

Rapidly she formed a plan to accomplish her ends, and then hurried away to get help in carrying it out. Her course was towards the village, but she did not have to go there for it. It was nearer at hand.

By the side of a small brook that ran noiselessly about the base of the hill, she found her sister, Bending Willow, waiting where she had left her until she should return.

For several minutes they conversed earnestly together, and laid their plans for action.

To her sister she confided what had passed between her and the renegade, and then unfolded the plot she had formed and the part she wished her to take in it.

Her plan was as follows:

As soon as it was dark they were to proceed together to the spot where she had so lately parted with her husband. Here Bending Willow was to remain while she clambered up to his hiding-place and had gained a point so near that he could not fail to hear the signal she would give, and which she knew would bring him forth from the cavern. But she would be careful that he should not find her, and when he gave an answering signal Bending Willow was to reply to it in her stead. When he had descended to the spot where their interviews often took place she would hasten to carry out the plan she had formed of ridding herself of her white rival. But Bending Willow must be careful that he should not see her, or he would mistrust what was going on, and all might fail. The darkness would be so great that it would be easy enough to elude him even when he was close upon her.

Bending Willow promised that her part should not fail, and when all was arranged they waited for the moment to come when they should attempt the carrying out of their plan.

As soon as it was dark Morning Star led the way back to the spot where she had parted with the renegade.

Once more she charged her sister with the part she was to play, and then made her way up the steep ascent to the entrance of the cavern which Justin Litch had flattered himself was known to him alone.

It was not far from the spot where Luke Hawkins and Harry had lost all clue of the trail among the rocks.

Down at the foot of the huge boulder there was a narrow opening scarcely large enough to admit of the passage of a full-grown person. A smaller boulder lay beside it, so nicely balanced that only a little effort was necessary to move it on one side.

This the Indian girl did without difficulty, and the passage was enlarged sufficiently to allow any one to pass through with ease.

Listening a moment, to make sure that there was no one without, she gave utterance to the signal of which we have before spoken.

For the space of a couple of minutes she waited, and then, while anger grew hot within her bosom, she repeated it. Her faithless husband was too busy with his new love to answer her call.

A little later and a ray of light flashing out told her that he was coming at last.

Hastily she fled away and enounced herself where it would be next to impossible for her to be discovered.

She could not see him from her hiding-place, owing to the darkness, but she heard his footsteps as he came forth upon the rock.

For a few moments she remained in suspense as to what he would do.

Evidently he thought that the signal had been given not far away, and so he was searching for her. At length, as though impatient at his fruitless search, he gave utterance to the answering signal.

There was a minute of profound silence, and then, just as she had begun to think that Bending Willow had forgotten her part the cry of the whip-poor-will came from below.

It was a good imitation, and she felt that he must be misled by it; but for a moment she was kept in suspense as to whether he would obey the signal or not.

Muttered oaths fell from his lips, and words that told her that she was indeed no longer beloved by him as he professed.

Then she heard his footsteps slowly descending, and she knew that the coast was clear for her.

Stealing from her place of concealment, she approached the entrance of the cavern once more.

Before descending into the gloomy passage she listened again for his footsteps.

Should he return and find her there she doubted not but that her life would pay the forfeit.

The echo of his steps sounded farther and farther away down the steep declivity, and she knew that for the next few minutes she would have nothing to fear from him. By that time he might return if he would, but he would find no trace of the maiden who had come between her and him. She should be where he would never set eyes on her alive again.

Hastily she descended into the passage and groped her way until she came to the door. But this did not impede her progress long. It had opened too often to her before to obstruct her passage now.

The fastenings which Justin Litch had made so secure were undone, and throwing open the door she stepped within the cavern.

Closing it behind her, she took a couple of steps forward and then paused and gazed about the cavern.

Ruth Lee was sitting by the table where Justin Litch had left her, and the light falling upon her face showed all her fair beauty, despite the paleness which was upon her countenance.

At a glance the Indian girl took in the table spread with food, and the air of comfort which was around, and all the jealousy of her nature was aroused. Justin Litch had never spread such an entertainment as this for her or tried this much for her comfort.

But a fierce joy was also in her heart at the thought that it was in her power to spoil all this, and that when her false lover returned the new love that he had brought would be gone from his sight for ever. The white maiden should be cold in death before he should set eyes on her again.

It was all that she could do to resist the impulse to spring upon her and slay her where she sat. But this she knew would never do. To find her murdered there would be a clue that Justin Litch could follow up until her agency in the matter was discovered.

He must be led to think that she had managed to escape, and then, if her mangled body was found without, he would think that maybe she had perished by falling over the cliffs.

Thus she reasoned and laid her plans, while her eyes were fixed with a deadly light upon the form of her victim.

At the sound of the Indian girl's footsteps Ruth had turned her face apprehensively toward the door, thinking that it was Justin Litch returning. Her surprise was great at the sight of the Indian girl; but the look that the latter gave her did not leave her long in doubt as to who she was. It told as plainly as words could have done that it was the wife of the renegade of whom she had heard, and Ruth was not long in reading upon her face that she was regarded as a dangerous rival.

A sudden hope came to her on the moment. Might there not be a chance to escape from the meshes Justin Litch had woven around her? To rid herself of a rival would not the girl before her help her to escape?

As drowning men are said to catch at straws, so did she grasp as eagerly at this hope. Rising from her seat, she took a step forward, holding out her hands imploringly, and saying, in a tone of piteous entreaty:

"Save me! Let the Indian girl listen to my prayers. If her heart is not as hard as these stones about me she will help me to escape from him who has brought me here."

There was a look of triumph on the face of Morning Star. It was the very thing she wished to have the paleface maiden willing to trust herself to her guidance. One part of her programme was thus easily arranged. With Ruth once without, she felt that she would have no difficulty in carrying out the other. Then she would be completely at her mercy.

"What! does the white maiden tire of her lover that she would flee from the nest where he has placed her while he is gone?"

"The paleface is no lover of the white maiden. Her head turns from him as from an evil thing. There is another among her own people who has won her love. My heart tells me that her captor is

dear to you. Are you not the wife of Justin Litch?"

"The paleface is my husband," answered Morning Star. "I am the daughter of a chief, and for love of him I went to dwell in his lodge many moons ago."

"But now he would cast you off and take me in your place. He has said as much to me. For your sake as well as my own do not let him do this thing."

There was a lurid and determined light in the eye of the Indian girl, but she replied, as though hesitating:

"What can Morning Star do? She is but a squaw, and her arm is not strong like that of a warrior."

"You can help me to escape from this place. Only set me free from the power of Justin Litch, and I will always bless you. Let me perish in the forest if I must. Death there, with only the wild beasts about me, is better than life here with him. Say that you will do your best to set me free from him."

"The ears of Morning Star have heard the words of the white maiden, and her heart is well toward her. She shall escape from him who is false to her and to the Indian girl whom he promised to love. But the moments are as swift as the wings of the eagle, and he will soon be back. Let the white maiden follow, and she shall escape from this place."

"Heaven bless you!" cried Ruth, the thoughts of escape giving her new strength. "Do not lose a moment, but let us go at once. I shall breathe freer when the air of Heaven is once more around me."

"Let the white maiden follow but her steps must be like the snow flakes when they fall in winter. Let her tongue also be as the frozen lake. The paleface's ears are sharp, and if he finds us his wrath will be like the tempest when the dark days of autumn have come."

"The paleface maiden hears, and she will obey," answered Ruth.

"But let her follow, and all will be well."

Morning Star turned toward the door as she spoke and opened it, and for a moment stood in the attitude of listening. But no sound came from without, so she beckoned Ruth through, and leaving the door standing ajar, as the latter might have done in her hurried escape, they went onward and soon emerged into the open air.

Never before had Ruth experienced such a feeling of relief as she did at that moment, and had she dared she would have called aloud her blessings upon the head of her supposed deliverer.

But had she known the thoughts that were passing in the mind of her guide she would have shuddered at the terrible peril which hung over her head.

No thought of mercy was in the heart of the Indian girl toward her helpless companion. Only with the death of the white maiden, which should be sure and speedy, could she hope to win back the love of her husband. Did she allow her to go at liberty he would follow on her trail and bring her back.

The moving boulder she swung into its place again, and then she paused and listened. No sound came from below to give her a clue as to the movements of Justin Litch. What had passed between him and Bending Willow, had they met, she could not tell.

She was just on the point of bidding Ruth follow her when a slight sound coming from below fell upon her ear.

Could it be that he was returning thus soon? At any rate there was no time for her to lose.

"Come," she said, in a whisper, to Ruth. "Let us go. The paleface is coming."

Ruth shrank closer to her as though for protection, and they moved away from the spot.

Hope of escape had given her new power of endurance, and she no longer felt the fatigue to which she had been subjected.

Escape from the clutches of the renegade was more than she had dared to hope for, but now it seemed as though it was on the eve of fulfilment; it seemed to her as though she could not be half thankful enough for this mercy.

The course taken by the Indian girl was toward the summit of the cliffs, and after a little time it was with difficulty that Ruth could keep pace with her.

At some places along which they passed a single misstep would have sent them down to certain death upon the jagged rocks below.

By these Morning Star led the way and they were passed in safety.

One would have thought by this that she had given over her terrible purpose; but she had not.

At last the summit of the cliffs was reached, and they paused for breath upon the very edge of a rock that made a sheer descent of a hundred feet.

Overcome by fatigue, and with her strength fast failing her, Ruth would have sunk down on the spot had not the Indian girl at that moment turned upon

her, and with a violent thrust sent her toppling over the very verge of the fearful abyss which yawned at their feet.

CHAPTER IX.

Revenge, at first though sweet,
Bitter ere long back on itself recoils. Milton.

A wild cry of horror and despair came from the lips of Ruth as she felt herself going down to a terrible death in the fearful chasm below. All the treachery of her companion flashed upon the instant across her mind, and she knew in that fearful moment that she had only been led forth from the cavern that her destruction might be accomplished, and yet death was better than the fate Justin Litch meant for her.

All these thoughts flashed through her mind on the instant, when it seemed as though she was suspended in mid air.

She felt herself going and clutched wildly about her for support.

Then as she felt herself sinking down, down, a strong arm was suddenly thrust beneath her and she was brought back to the solid rock, while a voice which sent a joyous thrill through her entire being exclaimed:

"Ruth—my Ruth—Heaven be praised that you are restored to me again."

It was the voice of her lover, Harry Libby, that sounded in her ears, and his strong arm had saved her from the terrible death with which she was menaced.

Her emotions were too great for her to speak, but she clung to him as a vine clings to the giant tree for support.

In the meantime Luke Hawkins had not been idle.

At the instant Morning Star had given her intended victim the push which she meant should send her over the cliff he had started up from the spot where himself and Harry had been concealed from the moment when they had been aware of the approach of the two females, and caught the Indian girl by the arm with a grip like that of a vice.

So near had they been, and so quick their motions, that they had been able to save Ruth from a terrible death.

For a few moments the Indian girl struggled to free herself from Luke's hold, but it was without avail. She might as well have hoped to escape from the embrace of a grizzly.

"You had better keep quiet now!" exclaimed Luke, tightening his hold upon her arm. "If you don't I may take it into my head to send you down yonder to see what kind of a spot it was where you were going to send this white gal here. I never did harm a squaw yet, but I'm mighty tempted to begin now. Be quiet I tell you. The Death Shadow has got hold of you, and you may as well hope to get rid of the gentleman in black himself. If you'll keep still, and answer a few questions I shall put to you, you shan't be hurt. But if you don't I'll set you a flying over the cliff as sure as my name is Luke Hawkins."

This threat, and the consciousness that her strength was no match for his, which by this time she had found out, had the desired effect, and she ceased her efforts to escape.

The threat Luke made had the effect of bringing Ruth Lee to herself, so that she managed to exclaim:

"Do not harm her, Luke. For my sake do her no injury; she is not so much to blame."

"Not to blame, is she? I'd like to know what you'd call sending you off flying through the air yonder? It looks a mighty sight like premeditated murder to me. If she had done it I'm mighty sure she would have followed after in short metre."

"But she did not, and so I beg of you to do her no harm. She is the wife of Justin Litch, and she helped me to escape from the place where he held me a prisoner. Had it not been for her you could never have found me."

"Well, I should think you ought to be obliged to her. Taking you away from him, and bringing you up here to push you off over the cliff, I declare it was mighty kind of her."

"But she considered me a rival. She thought that Justin Litch was going to cast her off and make me his wife instead. Had it not been for that she would not have attempted to do me harm."

"The paleface maiden has read the heart of Morning Star aright. It was that which made her seek her life. But the Death Shadow may do with her as he will. He has slain many of her kindred, and the Indian girl is not afraid to follow them to the Spirit Land."

"Didn't I tell you that I don't make war on squaws? I ain't redskin enough for that, though I wish there wasn't one of the race left on the face of the earth. Just answer me a question or two I'm going to put to you, and you shan't be hurt. Where is that black-hearted renegade you own for a husband?"

"Morning Star will not speak. She knows that



[THE INDIAN GIRL'S TREACHERY.]

the Death Shadow would take his life. He is her husband, and though he be false to her she will not have his blood upon her head."

"But he would take your life as soon as he would mine," said Harry, who stood with his arm about Ruth, as though he felt there was yet danger of her falling over the cliff. "Although you know it not, we were hidden down yonder at nightfall and heard all that passed between you when you accused him of seeking to cast you off that he might take the white maiden to his home. After you had left him he said to himself, so loud that we could hear, that you should no longer stand in his path. Therefore, why should you try to shield him now?"

"The heart of the Indian girl still clings to him although he is false to her. She would not be the means of taking away his life."

"But I'll not leave this spot until Ruth's father is avenged. With my own ears I heard him say that it was his hand that took away the old man's life. I will haunt this spot until I have his blood."

"Let the Death Shadow seek and find him then; the Indian girl will have no hand in it. She knows not where he is now. The paleface maiden has seen him as late as she. The hearts of the palefaces are all black and their words as idle as the winds."

"Hush!" cried Harry, in a low tone. "There is some one down yonder."

In a moment they were all listening intently to again catch the sound that had reached the ears of Harry.

Some one below was giving utterance to angry expressions.

They knew at once who it was, and the cause thereof. Justin Litch had discovered the escape of Ruth.

This and the wild-goose chase on which he had gone in search of her who had given the signal had rendered him insane with passion.

He knew at once that it could be the work of no other than Morning Star; therefore he was breathing aloud dire threats of vengeance upon her.

He knew that it was not possible for her to be far away, and he was searching wildly for her among the rocks, convinced that he would not set eyes on Ruth Lee alive. He felt that the wronged Indian girl would slay her at once, and wondered that she had not done so in the cavern the moment she had found her way there.

If she had killed Ruth she would die the most fearful death he could inflict upon her.

In an instant Luke Hawkins bethought himself of a plan to insure the destruction of the renegade. It

was to bring him to the spot where they stood at once.

Threatening the Indian girl with instant death, by hurling her from the cliff, in case she uttered a warning note, he bade Ruth raise her voice to so high a key that it could not fail to reach the renegade's ears, and so give him a clue to her whereabouts.

For an instant Ruth hesitated to do this. It seemed almost like murder to her.

Then the remembrance of her father, so foully slain, came upon her mind, and she felt an overmastering desire that his death might be avenged.

She hesitated no longer, but raised her voice as though speaking to some one, and in an instant the sounds from below ceased.

This told them that Justin Litch had heard her, for they knew that he would lose no time in hastening toward the summit of the cliffs.

They stood in profound silence, waiting for the moment when they might catch a glimpse of him approaching the spot where they stood.

Without a sound or a motion, the Indian girl stood as erect as a statue. Not a sound escaped her lips. Either she cared not to warn the renegade of the danger to which he was hastening, or else she was fearful that Luke Hawkins would carry out the threat he had made of flinging her over the cliffs.

The scout did not relinquish his hold upon her arm. He held her so that he could make good his word in case she opened her lips with a sound of warning.

In a short time they heard the sound of the renegade's footsteps hastening over the rocks. Nearer and nearer they drew, and at length they were close at hand. A moment more and his head would appear above the rocks.

Little he thought he was coming to the doom he so richly deserved.

At last with a bound the renegade sprang up the remaining steep ascent and stood not half a dozen paces from them.

At that very instant a cry burst from the lips of Morning Star, which echoed loudly around. It was meant for a warning, but it came too late. Even had Justin Litch understood it he could not escape the doom to which he had come.

The instant the cry came from the lips of Morning Star Luke let go his hold upon her arm, and as quick as thought brought his rifle to his shoulder. Another moment and his finger had pressed the trigger and the bullet sped forth on its deadly errand.

A loud report rang out, waking the echoes of the cliffs, and mingled with it was a wild, despairing cry

from the lips of the renegade as he toppled down over the rocks, his doom sealed for ever.

If the bullet had not ended his career the rough, jagged rocks below finished it.

Robert Lee was avenged.

Harry stretched out his hand toward Morning Star, impelled by a fear that she might seek to throw herself over the cliffs after him. As if divining his purpose she put back his hand, saying:

"The paleface need not fear, the Indian girl will not follow her husband. His paths were dark and his heart wicked. He has brought his doom upon his own head. Let him go."

"That's where you're sensible," exclaimed Luke. "Tain't any use to grieve for the like of him, much less to throw your life away. He ought to have died a dozen deaths to pay for what he has done."

"He has gone to the Spirit Land, and so let him rest," said Morning Star. "Now let the palefaces go to their homes. Morning Star could stop them if she would—by a word she could bring all the warriors of the Miami upon them. But she will not do it. She will show them the way to the foot of the cliffs, and then they shall turn their faces toward their own lodges. Come."

To this none of the party made any objections. On the contrary, they were glad of the protection she would afford them, deep as they were in the enemy's country. So they followed her down the steep descent, and, once at the bottom, they parted, after thanking her for the favour she had shown them.

Neither of our friends ever saw her again, but months after they learned that she had become the bride of Springing Panther, the young chief who had sought for her love unsuccessfully in former times.

The storm which had so long threatened cleared away, and they went through the forest toward the settlement, their spirits elated with their triumph and escape.

A sharp lookout for danger was kept up by the scout, but nothing occurred to alarm them, and in due time their homes were reached in safety, where a warm welcome was accorded them by those who had sought long and earnestly for a clue to the missing Ruth.

In a short time Ruth and Harry were united, and peace and happiness took up their dwelling with them.

Luke Hawkins was their constant friend, and made their cabin his home whenever he was in the settlement.

He still made good his claim to the name of Death Shadow, and many were the dangers he averted from the homes of the settlers.

THE END.



[RUPERT APPEARS.]

SHIFTING SANDS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Elgiva; or, the Gipsy's Curse," "The Snapt Link," "The Lost Coronet," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Tell me, thou soul of her I love,
Oh, tell me whither art thou fled;
To what delightful world above
Appointed for the happy dead.
Or dost thou free at pleasure roam,
And sometimes share thy lover's woe
When void of thee his cheerless home
Can now, alas, no comfort know?

"WELL, niece, and how are the girls this morning?" inquired Sir Fulke, entering Mrs. Digby's breakfast-room while the meal was yet scarcely commenced. "But I need not ask—I can guess. Trissa is complaining, and the little heroine bright and blooming."

Mrs. Digby looked annoyed.
Granville laughed.

"Really, uncle, I must say you are very hard upon Trissa," said the mother, with as much resentment as she dared to show to the wealthy old bachelor. "She is really so extremely delicate that I am not at all surprised such a shock as she had yesterday has had a very serious effect upon her. I have persuaded her to remain in bed till Dr. James comes at any rate."

"And the other—the noble creature to whom you owe your child's life—what have you achieved in her case, Helen?" asked the baronet, quickly.

"Well, she was so positive that she was quite well and determined to get up, so I thought it would do her no harm to allow it," returned Mrs. Digby, with a slight access of colour. "She is much stronger than Trissa it is easy to see."

"Certainly, I quite agree with you, especially in mind," observed Sir Fulke, coolly. "She gave pretty good proof of that yesterday—eh, Granville? She is brave enough for an admiral in my opinion."

"And beautiful enough for a princess," put in the young man, enthusiastically.

Mrs. Digby gave a warning glance at Granville, which he did not appear to heed, for he went on, ruthlessly:

"Well, I am glad on the whole that she is not here, for I wanted to arrange with you about the best course to be pursued with her. Of course she must have a suitable return for such a service as she has rendered us."

"Certainly," put in Mrs. Digby, with a sigh of relief. "Anything in my power would not be too

much for such a blessing as my Trissa's life. But it is scarcely kind of you to speak so disparagingly of my daughter, uncle, and that perhaps made me unjust to Miss St. Croix."

"Tush, niece! tush! you ought to know me by this time," said Sir Fulke. "I don't pretend to humour spoiled girls, but still I allow that Trissa is very pretty and light-hearted and not more silly than most others of her age. And it is just because I am heartily glad the child is safe, instead of being dragged for in the Serpentine, that I wish to do the right thing as a reward."

"And I am sure, according to my means, I should be delighted to make her any present or—"

"Any fiddle-strings!" interrupted the baronet, hastily. "There, do you suppose a bank note or a necklace or such nonsense can reward a girl for your only daughter's life? It's a very different thing I've got in my head. You must know that I went yesterday to the woman who has taken her as a sort of *souffre-douleur* and drudge, to inquire about her story, and as far as I can make out the poor child is a stray waif on the world, abandoned by her natural protectors, while gifted by nature in a most dangerous way. Now I think, niece, she ought to be rescued from this kind of wandering life, eh?"

"My dear uncle, surely you would be taking a terrible responsibility on yourself," said Mrs. Digby, with a look of alarm.

"Nonsense, Helen. Do you think I'm such an old idiot as to saddle myself with a young girl like that, which would be gossiped about, even old as I am? No, what I propose is a very different arrangement. Let her come here for a home, and give her a chance of a better establishment than she can ever have at that mean old woman's. And I'll allow enough for her, do you see, Helen? So it will make no difference to your income."

Mrs. Digby looked blank and doubtful.

"My dear uncle, remember. Such a difference in station and position, and then—"

She paused and looked at her son with a significant glance which Sir Fulke either did not or would not understand.

"I tell you what it is, niece," he said. "I grant that all you say may be right enough if you were going to be hampered with any of the relations, but, as the girl is perfectly alone in the world, I cannot see there would be any difficulty for you. She is handsome enough to cover a whole multitude of sins, and, if I'm not most cruelly mistaken, she'll do Trissa a world of good instead of harm. The child wants just such a tonic to make up for the enfeebling petting she goes under."

"And you really think that she ought to have all this return for one act?" mused Mrs. Digby, hesitating.

"Yes, mother, and more were it possible," interposed Granville, firmly. "Suppose your Trissa were lying now a corpse, or in the cold waters of that dreadful pond—what then?"

The mother's heart did soften; despite her vanity and weak pride in her child, she was warm and loving in her nature.

"Well, we will consider it settled, subject to the girl's own consent," went on Sir Fulke. "Can I see her, Helen?"

"I will send for her if you wish," said Mrs. Digby.

"No, let me see her alone," said the old baronet; "I would like to get to the whole bottom of the matter. Perhaps she will be more frank with an old fellow like me than she would with you or even Trissa."

If Sir Fulke had been only a poor post-captain or even admiral on his pay, it would have been doubtful that the request would have been even entertained. But with a handsome heritage before her eyes she was bound, as she said, for her children's sake, to humour him in every fancy, however much it might cost her.

"Well, if you choose, you can see her in Trissa's morning room," she replied, hesitatingly.

"Which ought properly to be called schoolroom," bluntly remarked the admiral. "However, it does not matter to me, so long as I have the child to myself, and pretty quick too, for I must be in Whitehall before twelve."

Cora St. Croix was perhaps never more calmly, touchingly lovely than when she came into the room where the old baronet awaited her.

The very nearness to death had perhaps calmed the feverish tumult of her feelings—the weary impatience of life that she had once indulged. At least, she was not useless, objectless, she had prevented misery, and saved life, and that idea was the best consolation, the most animating cordial she could know in her desolate life.

Sir Fulke had thought her most strikingly beautiful in feature and expression even in that dragged, miserable state in which he had seen her the day before. But as she quietly and gracefully bent in acknowledgment of his greeting he fairly lost his paternal old heart to the noble, high-bred-looking stranger.

"Come, my dear, sit down. Mrs. Digby tells me that you declare yourself quite well this morning, but still you can scarcely be strong enough for

much standing about, and I want to have a talk with you."

Cora obeyed, though with a rather anxious look in her dark eyes, which did not escape her companion. "You need not be alarmed, my dear, I'm not going to pry into your history nor ask you to consent to anything dreadful; and above all I am not such an old idiot as to fall in love at seventy with a girl fifty years and more my junior; you understand that before I begin?"

Sir Fulke's tone was brusque, but no one could have mistaken its kindly purpose, and he was simply surprised at the look of startled pain which his words brought to Cora's face.

"Please do not trouble about me. It will be the greatest kindness you can do me," she exclaimed. "I can do quite well without any one to help or care for me. It has always brought me nothing but pain and grief."

"How is that, child?" he said, sternly; "surely, child, at your age you can never have been guilty of anything wrong—you cannot have known any misfortune from the usual cause of your sex—love?"

Cora flushed crimson.

"I cannot say more," she replied, with a haughty air. "I wish for nothing. Surely I need not be bound to give you anything like a confession of my history?"

Sir Fulke was somewhat perplexed. He had begun by assuring her he had no wish to force confidence. What could he do or say to satisfy himself of the safety of his rather rash course and yet maintain the reticence he had promised?

"I never was good at any round-about steering," he said, at last, "and if you recall the girl I imagine you'll know how to deal with a plain tale. In the first place, I confess I am so much inclined to trust you that I believe I should be stupid enough to take your honest word for your complete innocence. Yet of course, where a girl like my young niece is in question, you yourself see I ought to demand as much as that before I bring her in contact with you."

"I have no wish—" Cora began.

"Pooh, pooh! child, don't get in a huff because I am plain sailing and frank," interrupted the baronet, hastily. "I never said you had any wish, or asked for anything, but I have my own wishes and plans, and it's hard if a child like you is to put up your silly pride in the way. All I want is to be certain from your own lips that you were never, either from misfortune or any other cause, been forced into conduct or scenes that could make it undesirable you should be in companionship with a young, innocent creature like my niece Trissie. I ask no more before I explain my plans to you."

Cora felt as if in a dream.

The old scene in her Boulogne home seemed to repeat itself, if these hints were what she interpreted them.

Had the result of that been so happy as to induce any repetition of the proposal she anticipated?

"I am perfectly innocent in word or deed of any wilful wrong, sir, if that is what you wish me to say," she returned, haughtily. "I am as blameless as your niece in such respect. But I cannot say more, I cannot explain one circumstance of the past. All I know of myself is that I have been a deserted foundling from my infancy, and have, as I told you before, only found deeper misery from every fresh effort to befriend me. There seems no truth, no disinterestedness in the world," she added, bitterly.

"Pooh, child, pooh! you will say differently when you are my age," returned the old admiral, cheerily. "I've found folks generally are better than they seem, if you do but try and find out the good instead of the bad about them. You see I am in earnest," he went on, "for I believe in so much good in you that I am about to make you a decided proposal, for your good, as I believe. I know we cannot repay risking your life for our Trissie's, because nothing could have compensated for the risk you ran; but at least you can give us a kind of mutual-benefit arrangement by consenting to take up your residence here instead of with that interesting lady I saw yesterday, and to save all scruple I shall charge myself with all your expenses so far as my niece is concerned, and allow you pocket money, so that you will be independent of any one. Do you see what I mean? I am not going to adopt you as my child, not a bit of it, only I should be delighted for Trissie, if you will make yourself happy with her and try to put a little of your own spirit into the little spoilt pet."

Tears were rushing fast to Cora's eyes.

"I thank you from my very heart, but—" she began.

"There, speak out in plain English, I hate ifs and buts," said the old gentleman, testily. "Will you come or not?"

"I had rather come to you," she replied, with her large eyes raised to his, as if a whole flood of tenderness were pouring from them, in their tearful grati-

tude. "Not as an adopted child, as you say, but to try and make you happy and wait on you and nurse you if you were ill. I am afraid—I know they would not like it if I did," she went on, frankly. "There, do not deceive me. You must know that Mrs. Digby could not wish for a stranger in her family."

"And you think you could manage me and lead me by the nose, do you?" returned the old baronet, huskily.

"No, if I thought so I would not come," she said, calmly.

Sir Fulke paused for a few minutes. The case seemed to assume a decidedly new place in his ideas.

There was something so exceedingly bewitching in such a picture. A lovely, high-spirited, graceful girl always in his sight, gladdening his home, and yet bringing no responsibility on his shoulders save to allow her sufficient for her wants would be a decided sunbeam on his last days.

He had always shrank from such an idea where his niece and her children were in question.

These ideas and habits would, he felt, be so very different to his own, and he would not bind himself either to the life or the expectations such an arrangement would entail.

But Cora, the bounding, accustomed to Miss Minchin's tender mercies and uncongenial work, could not demand any such sacrifice at his hands.

"You don't know what you are asking, child. I am a curious old fellow, with all sorts of crochets and hard 'sea-faring' ways. Better be content with my plans. Come into my niece's family, be a companion to a girl of your own age, and you'll find it will answer a great deal better, and you'll be as happy as the day is long."

"Happy!" she repeated, "never. That is out of the question for me. I can never be happy while a stray wail without ties or affection in the world. But all this is wrong, foolish," she went on, hastily.

"And it can signify nothing to any one but myself. Will you tell me the truth? Does Mrs. Digby know—does she approve of this plan of yours?"

"I have her full consent. I don't say she is not a wee bit jealous," returned the frank old seaman, "but you'll soon win her heart and Trissie's. And as to Greenville he'll soon be off, he goes to Oxford at Easter, so you won't have much of his company."

Cora hesitated as she had never done before—no, not when Sibbald Carew had made the same offer to her in childhood days.

There was a motive apart from self for her decision then; now it was a question of personal interest and safety which yet warred with pride and alarm.

"May I speak to Mrs. Digby? may I be as frank with her as I have been with you before I enter her family as her dependent? I cannot be forced upon her, indeed I cannot. I had rather starve. If it were you it would be different. I would come to you directly and be happy—yes, as happy as I ever can be here."

He laughed outright.

"Don't tell my niece that in your frankness, little simpton," he said, "or she will think you are trying to catch the old tar and cut her out. However, there is some reason in what you say, and I'll send for Mrs. Digby at once. No time like the present to clench these matters. I hate dawdling and delays."

"But alone," pleaded Cora. "She would not be so free with you to control her. Let me go to her, and tell her the whole truth, and then, whatever happens, it is not any reproach to me. Nay, it must be so," she said, firmly, "or I must reject all your kind, good offers."

"You are a wilful, obstinate little creature," exclaimed Sir Fulke, half angrily, "but anything is better than deceit in my eyes, so if you are determined to cut your own throat and cast away my kindness it's no fault of mine. There, go; I'm sure I don't care whether you manage to quarrel with her, it's always the way with your vain, wilful sex. I'm half inclined to throw up the idea altogether."

And he paced the room in perturbed quarter-deck fashion, resolutely turning his eyes from Cora's lovely, anxious face.

"I am not ungrateful, but I have suffered so cruelly," she said, venturing at last to approach him and lay her hand on his arm. "I dare not—indeed I dare not risk any more such misery. But, if Mrs. Digby can truly bid me welcome, I will thankfully accept such a refuge," she added, mournfully.

Sir Fulke cleared his throat, and shook her hand from his arm.

"There, be off—you make a child of me," he said. "You must have your own way, I suppose. Stay here, child, and I will send my niece to you."

It was an anxious suspense for the girl during the few minutes that elapsed before the door again opened, and Mrs. Digby entered with a cold, unpromising expression on her face that brooded little good to the foundling. But it did Cora good, for it nerved her proud spirit to carry out her purpose, and

she quietly waited for the lady to commence the interview.

"You sent for me, Miss St. Croix, so Sir Fulke tells me," were Mrs. Digby's first words. "I am ready to hear all you have to say. I owe you a great deal," she went on. "All I can do to repay you I am only too happy to attempt."

"Then please tell me the truth, that will be my best reward," returned Cora, earnestly. "Sir Fulke has offered me a home for the present in your house. I know it must be an intrusion on you, Mrs. Digby. I do not think you wish it, except for his sake. And I cannot accept his kind proposal unless you tell me you can receive me frankly, and look on me with kindness. It would only be worse than the greatest hardships I could suffer," she went on, hurriedly, "and no favour to me, indeed it would not."

Mrs. Digby had watched herself with her face somewhat shaded from Cora's eyes, and the girl could not heed its expression during the pause that ensued. But she guessed that a struggle was going on in the mother's heart, and she respected and trusted her more indulgently from the effort it spoke.

"You have taken the best way of ensuring my confidence and respect, Miss St. Croix," Mrs. Digby said, at last. "I will confess that when my uncle spoke of his scheme I did shrink from the idea of admitting a stranger into my family, and had much rather have shown my gratitude in some other way for Trissie's life. But if you are as truthful and frank as you prove yourself in this instance I am ready to make the trial. You shall be welcome, honestly welcome among us, and in time, I daresay, I shall learn to love you, if you deserve my regard. But all will depend on your own conduct in my house, and more especially on your reserve and correctness of demeanour in preserving your proper place. Are you content with this?—do you understand me?"

"Yes," was Cora's answer, in low, firm tones; "yes, I do understand, and I will do my best to be content. It is all that I have any right to expect in this strange, weary world."

"Then it is settled, and I shall go and inform my uncle and make the necessary arrangements," said Mrs. Digby, rising with an air of relief. "And I daresay we shall be exceedingly comfortable if the matter be properly understood by us all."

Cora was left alone in what was to be her future home.

And as she turned from the closed door and gazed round the luxurious apartment of the potted Trissie she clasped her hands with sickening doubt as to the result of her compliance.

"Alas, alas! is it not but a new slavery, a new danger?" she moaned. "And yet I felt that it might be rebellion and ingratitude to refuse the offered boon."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

And pining Love shall waste their youth
Or Jealousy with rankling tooth
That only gnaws the secret heart,
Grim, ghastly, comfortless Despair,
And Sorrow's piercing dart.

"Hush, listen! Are you alone?" murmured like the music of an Æolian harp on Netta Carew's ears, while yet it brought a strange throbbing to her heart which warned her of the approach of one familiar and beloved.

Yes, "beloved" as much as it was in her nature to love any one but her own self, the chief idol of her heart.

Still there had been a romance, a flattering homage about Rupert Falconer's devotion to herself which enchaind her young fancy more effectually than more conventional lovetaking might have effected.

And the restraint and seclusion in which she was now held had a yet greater tendency to deepen her memories of the young stranger.

She sprang from her seat as if galvanised. "Rupert!" she exclaimed. "Is it possible? Hush! you will not be safe," she added, hastily. "My tyrant uncle would expel you in a moment if he found us together."

Rupert Falconer obeyed the girl so far as to noiselessly advance into the room where she was sitting, round which a verandah ran like a foreign "jalousie" to defend the girlish bower.

It was no very difficult task to climb this trellised ascent, and to Rupert, with his seafaring instincts, it was little more than level ground for an entrance to Netta's chamber.

"It matters little, save for yourself, dearest," he said, tenderly, gazing on the young daughter of the Carews with the admiration she might fairly elicit from far colder eyes than the sailor's.

She was just at the age when every month added to her beauty.

Fair, blooming, yet delicate as a blush rose, and with each feature rapidly maturing and rounding into soft beauty, the girl was a rare specimen of such

charms as are seldom seen save in the aristocracy of our own favoured land.

"And I am sure I do not care," returned Netta, hastily. "Anything would be better than this detestable espionage and tyranny. Lord Treville might as well sentence me to a convent at once as keep me shut up from any conversable human being."

The young man laughed gaily. "It would be a difficult task to sentence my lovely Netta to such a fate," he exclaimed. "Nature and fortune alike forbid such a profanation. But," he added, more sadly, "what treachery it seems for me to dare to speak thus to you—the heiress of a noble and wealthy race. I ought never to attempt to see you more, nor would I if you were in the full flush of happiness and surrounded by love and tenderness."

"Then it is pity, only pity," returned the girl, archly; "I am flattered and duly grateful, Monsieur Rupert."

She dropped a courtesy as she spoke that half mocked, half enchanted the young man by its sportive grace.

"Not pity, Netta, for that implies some inferiority," he returned, "yet perhaps it may be so. Perhaps your youth and gentle helplessness where tyranny is concerned may in a measure constitute such dependence. Heaven knows, to my sorrow, that such a freedom from the torture of love is not my fate," he added, bitterly. "It has been my bane, my deception. I cannot, if I would, rid myself of its power."

"Why should you?" she said, sincerely. "What were you men made for, except it was to fall victims? Nay, do not look so shocked. Did you not say just now we were sadly weak? Your attraction to us must be our only strength, and you are mine," whispered she, in a soft, gentle tone that won him to yet deeper devotion than she had demanded at his hands.

"And I will be so," he exclaimed. "Netta, from this moment, I vow myself to you, as your champion, your guard from all the cruel influences that surround you. And I ask nothing from your youth and inexperience except your confidence and trust."

It was a rash vow, and in after days one at least felt its fatal power; but Netta, gay, vain, and languid, eagerly accepted such a homage to her charms.

"And, if I should send for you, you will take my part, will you, Rupert?" she said, in her childlike tone, that she had not quite lost where it suited her to use it.

"As I would the liege lady of my heart, the crowned queen of my life," he returned, fervently. "Netta, do you know that the faithless lover you once favoured with your love and interest has been in well-deserved danger, from which I rescued him on condition that he abstained from troubling you more, or allowing the scandal that he had caused to blight your fair prospects? But for that I would have flung him to the ruin and disgrace he highly deserved. Netta," he went on, passionately. "I have been disappointed, deceived, wherever I have put my trust. Would to Heaven that I were of your own station in life, and that I dare trust to your young, fresh, generous nature for my hope of happiness."

"And are you not, are you sure?" said Netta, doubtfully, gazing at his handsome, aristocratic face, as if she could scarcely believe in his implied assertion.

"Alas, alas! I have but too good a surety of it," he returned, with a half-sad, half-amused smile. "My birth is a very humble one. My father I never remember, though I have many times seen his picture, and could almost fancy that I did know him, with his frank, manly face and kindly smile. But my mother still lives, Netta, and, though perhaps far superior to her apparent station, she has no pretensions to what a Carew would call gentle birth. But I have a heart and brain, a strong arm, and a firm will, which may be of some avail to my Netta," he went on, fondly. "Yes, 'mine' to protect and guard my lady, my queen, the sole star of my dark life."

He was so romantic, so high-bred looking was that strange lover, and his pretensions to her favour were so modest that the girl in her vain, gay nature was easily tempted to forget all but the pleasure of his devotion in the wearisome seclusion of her present life.

"But," she replied, wistfully, "perhaps you would say I had done wrong, and reproach me as you do these others, who you say have deceived you. Will you promise not to be angry with me when I am obliged to do what Aunt Emily wishes? It would make me so miserable to offend you and for you to be angry with me."

Her white hand was on his arm, her lovely child girl face was upturned to his, with a pleading inquiry in its lovely features; the coral lips were half parted, the blue eyes, with their silken brown lashes, opened to their full extent, and revealing all the clear, deep beauty of their violet brightness.

It was a bewitching picture, she was so sweet, so winning at that moment.

True, Cora St. Croix was far superior in her noble, faultless style, that might have challenged competition from a court of judges.

But then the young man was piqued and angry with his early idol, and Netta possessed for him the charm which is so potent with some minds, that of a feeble and dependent temper. Cora was self-reliant, high-spirited, self-controlled, and to Rupert's masculine ideas it was far less bewitching than the clinging dependence of the younger girl now waiting for his reply.

"You are an angel, sweet Netta. It would indeed be a brute who could find any wrong in aught you did or said or thought," he replied. "Netta, do me at least the justice to trust me, to believe that I would never wound your sweet nature by such barbarity. Only confide in, only trust me, and you will see the result," he went on, venturing to take her hand in his. "It will at least give me some bright sunbeams, some interest in life, to watch over your sweet young happiness, while others desert and tyrannize over you. You will not refuse me, you will not deepen the gloom over my whole future by denying me this boon?"

"If you promise that I will," she said, in a low, soft tone. "But do not leave me; mind you keep your promise. I am so desolate, so miserable. Will you stay near me, dear Rupert, and give me some means of summoning you when I am in need? Uncle Treville is a gloomy tyrant, and Aunt Emily so silly that I have no confidence in them. I would run off to-morrow, so far as they are concerned," she added, laughingly, "but I cannot quite forget that I am a lady and a Carew."

"Nor would I like you to do so, my peerless Netta," he said, eagerly; "and, as to the mode of summoning me to your presence, see here."

He took from his dress a small pearl-headed silver arrow, of some eight inches long, of a most peculiar workmanship and setting.

"If you will place this in the large walnut-tree that I saw on the very edge of your uncle's grounds, and close to the lake that skirts them, it will bring me to your side ere many hours are over," he said. "I shall look at that tree every morning and night till you dismiss me from the trust, and when I see that emblem I will instantly seek your presence."

Netta examined the bauble anxiously.

"How pretty and rare it is," she remarked, musingly, apparently more occupied with the beauty of the trinket than the owner's words. "Will you give it to me, Rupert? It is such a charming little trifle."

Rupert shook his head doubtfully.

"I willingly would comply with your slightest wish, dearest," he said, "but in this instance it is out of my power. I have promised never to give that away, and I dare not break my word."

"Is it a love gift then?" she asked, jealously.

"A love gift! Perhaps; at least I hope so," he said, smiling faintly. "But not in the sense you perhaps mean. It was given me by my mother when I first left home, as a kind of charm, I believe, and with strict injunctions not to part with it on any pretext whatever. But it will be more precious than ever if it avail for your service and my own happiness in guiding you. Now I must go. I will not fail in my constant watch," he added as he lingeringly turned from the verandah-guarded apartment where the interview had been held.

Netta held out her hand to him with an inviting smile, and he clasped it eagerly to his lips.

"Forgive me, it is but the respectful homage of my heart," he murmured as he hastily relinquished it and darted from the apartment with a speed that spoke alike of fear and haste to subdue the tell-tale emotion of his heart.

Yet perhaps he was ill satisfied with his own weakness, albeit there is ever a strengthening, compensating power in a well-placed and honourable love.

It was perhaps strange that at the very hour when these two young creatures were exchanging their doubtful vows Lord Treville was listening to the report of his trusted emissary.

"Well, Ponsford, in few words what have you learned?" he asked, sharply. "I want no long tale, remember, only the result of your mission."

"Very little, I regret to say, my lord. I have seen Mrs. Falconer. She confesses that she had such a person as you describe in her keeping, and that there was a child born to her; but whether boy or girl, whether it is living or dead, she refuses to tell till her own way and time. My own opinion is that she is waiting for some other reward, or some crisis when she believes she can make more advantage from her information."

The earl considered for a few moments, then a deeper gloom than ever settled on his haggard features.

"I fear yet worse than that, Ponsford," he said. "It seems to me that the unhappy offspring of this dead victim is perhaps a wanderer and a criminal on the earth; perhaps living a life of shame and misery, which will not be revealed to me till past all redemption and hope. It is a bitter punishment for a youthful crime, Ponsford; and yet my whole life has been an atonement, if penitence and solitude and absence of love and joy and peace can be amends."

"My lord, be comforted," returned the man, earnestly. "Be sure this woman would have gladly told such evil tidings. My belief is far different. It is but so to hide and withhold her information that you would be willing to give any bribe she asks."

(To be continued.)

EDITH LYLE'S SECRET.

By the Author of "Daisy Thornton," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XLIII.

It is not my intention to narrate in full all the incidents of that summer which our people long remembered as the gayest they had ever known. There were guests at the Bartons', and the Montgomerys', and the Morrisons', but nowhere was there so much hilarity and mirth as at Schuyler House, for there from time to time came dashing, brilliant people until every room was full, and Godfrey took a small apartment in the attic, and made many jokes upon the high life he was enjoying.

There were sails upon the river, and excursions to the hills, and picnics in the woods, and dances on the piazza, and croquet parties on the lawn, and dinners, and suppers, and breakfasts, and lunches, and private theatricals in the great drawing-room, to which a few favoured ones were admitted for the sum of half a sovereign, which was paid because of the object, a font for the mission church, where Alice and Julia were again zealous labourers, with Robert and Godfrey as occasional allies.

Toward the end of the summer there was a grand party at the Ridge House, to which the young people from Schuyler House were bidden, and Alice's toilet was wonderful in texture and style, while Julia was pronounced the most beautiful lady there until Gertrude came, in her simple muslin dress, and eclipsed them all.

It was rather late when she entered the crowded rooms, and after greeting Mrs. Barton and Rosamond, and drifting away from Mr. Schuyler, who had accompanied her, she found herself close to Godfrey before she was aware of his proximity. Since that promise to his father she had studiously avoided him, and Alice had no just cause for jealousy so far as Gertrude was concerned.

Godfrey too had made up his mind to accept his fate, and kept aloof from Gertrude as much as possible, though there was a world of kindness in his voice whenever he spoke to her, and he always knew when she came in and when she went out, and his eyes followed her with a longing, hungry look, which Alice would have resented had she noticed it and interpreted it aright.

But she was not quick to see, and as Godfrey was very attentive to her, and called her his little cat, and teased her unmercifully, and kissed her every morning, she was satisfied and happy, and on the night of the party stood flushed and triumphant at his side, while he fanned her heated face, which he said looked like a lobster, telling her she must not dance again for an hour at least, no matter who asked her; it was too warm for such exercise, and he preferred the open air; he did not mean to dance again himself if he could help it, and if Alice liked they would go out upon the west balcony, where it was cooler.

There had been a cloud on Godfrey's face the entire evening—an inquiet, dissatisfied look—and his eyes were constantly wandering over the moving throng in quest of one they did not see.

"Where is Miss Westbrooke?" Tom Barton had asked him anxiously, but Godfrey could not tell him.

She was intending to come with his father, he said, and possibly had not yet arrived; and as the festivity was nothing to Tom without Gertrude he sauntered away to an open window, and when Rosamond asked him to dance with a young lady who was a guest at the Ridge House, and who had been a wall flower all the evening, he answered, "Oh, bother! can't; it's too hot," and stepped through the window upon the balcony to be out of the way.

Neither he nor Godfrey cared to dance, though both had in their minds a graceful little figure which they would gladly have clasped in their arms and whirled about the room, and when at last she appeared and came upon Godfrey just as he had proposed going out upon the piazza with Alice he forgot everything but his surprise and delight at seeing her, and exclaimed, joyfully:

"Oh, Gertie, I'm so glad you have come. I've been waiting for you to dance with me. Come, they are just forming a new set."

He held both his arms toward her, and Gertie, unmindful of everything and seeing nothing but the look in Godfrey's eyes and the arms held to her, went straight into them, thinking to herself:

"For once—just this once—I may be happy with him."

And she was happy, and Godfrey too—and people looked admiringly at the handsome pair, and strangers asked who the beautiful girl with the bright hair and simple dress was and where she came from.

I was at the party that night, and stood very near to Alice when Gertie came in and was snatched up so quickly by Godfrey. I had heard him announce his intention not to dance for an hour at least and ask Alice to go with him where it was cooler, and Alice had taken a step toward the door when Gertie came and changed the entire aspect of affairs.

"Godfrey," I heard Alice say, as her lover moved away from her, but Godfrey was deaf and blind to everything but the fair girl on his arm, and Alice called in vain.

Godfrey had teased her for her red face, but it was pale enough now, and her small eyes had in them a greenish light as they followed Godfrey's tall form and caught occasional glimpses of Gertie's long, bright curls which came below her waist and were the wonder of the room. Alice was very indignant, and when the question was put to her "Who is that beautiful girl dancing with Mr. Schuyler?" she stood on tiptoe, pretending to be looking toward the dancers, and answered, with suppressed bitterness:

"Oh, that is Gertie Westbrooke, a girl who lives with Mrs. Schuyler and sees a little to Arthur—a kind of nursery governess, I believe."

"Ah, yes, thank you," and Mrs. Jamieson put up her glass to look again at the girl "who lived with Mrs. Schuyler and was a kind of nursery governess."

Meanwhile Godfrey and Gertie were unmindful of everything but the fact that for a brief space they were together, hand touching hand in a clasp of love rather than form, and eye meeting eye with a sad, remorseful kind of pitying tenderness as if each knew they were tasting forbidden fruit and for the last time too.

This at least was Godfrey's thought. To-morrow it would all be over and he would be Alice's again, but now, to-night, he was Gertie's and she was his, and he abandoned himself to the delight until he seemed intoxicated with happiness. He had never danced with her since the memorable night years ago when she had been his partner many times, a little, airy, restless humming-bird who had infused something of her own life and elasticity into his rather languid movements and made him try to be worthy of his partner. Gertie was very young then, and no thought of calling her his had entered Godfrey's heart, where now even in the merry dance and keeping time to the stirring music the sad refrain was repeating itself over and over again:

"It might have been, but it's too late, too late."

There was another dance, and another, and then Godfrey led Gertie out upon the west balcony where he had proposed taking Alice, and where he now sat down with Gertie at his side, and looking into her eyes of blue forgot the eyes of greenish gray which had followed his every movement, and in which were little gleams of fire when they saw him going out and the care he took to wrap Gertie's cloak, or rather Edith's cloak, around her white arms and shoulders.

It certainly was not chance which led Alice that way; she went on purpose with a group of heated girls eager for a breath of air, and her garments swept against Gertie's as she went by, and the green eyes looked at Godfrey with a look he understood and did not resent, for he knew that he deserved it; but he was not penitent and he did not give Gertie up until his father, who had been talking politics in a distant room, and did not know of his son's misadventure, came to find her and take her out to supper.

Then Godfrey went in quest of Alice, but she was already appropriated by a young exquisite, who waxed his moustache, and wore a quizzing glass on his nose, and her only answer was a little defiant sneer when Godfrey said:

"I see I am too late."

So Godfrey took me out and was restless and excited and full of life and fun. But I saw that his spirits were forced and that his eyes went often to the part of the room where Gertie stood, surrounded by a group of gentlemen who were ostensibly talking to Mr. Schuyler, but really admiring her as the most beautiful lady there.

Alice was standing near us, and once Godfrey offered her some lobster salad with a comical look on his face, but Alice did not take it or respond to him

in any way, and I knew there was a quarrel in store for him, and pitied him because he was answerable for his actions towards that little pugnosed, green-eyed lady whose only attraction beside a certain grace and piquancy of manner was thirty thousand a year.

I do not think she spoke to him again that night, and I know she did not ride home with him, for I saw the four girls from Schuyler House stowed away with Mr. Schuyler, and heard Godfrey tell his father not to send his carriage back as he and Robert preferred to walk.

And so the party was over and one heart at least was sadder for it, and one was in a wild tumult of joy and regret as it recalled glances and tones which meant so much and which had come too late to be of any avail.

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE morning succeeding the party was very hot and sultry, and two, at least, of the young ladies at Schuyler House were cross and tired when they joined the family at breakfast. Especially was this the case with Alice, who had slept but little, and whose temper was still at the boiling point. There were dark circles beneath her eyes, and her complexion was so muddy and bad that powder was called in requisition to make her at all presentable.

Now if there was one thing more than another in fashionable life which Godfrey detested it was powder.

"It made a woman look like a mouse just out of a flour-barrel," he said, "and he could detect it a mile off."

Alice knew his opinion, and generally respected it, but this morning she was not in a mood to care particularly for his likes or dislikes, and, dressing herself in haste, she went down to breakfast with a little patch of powder on her cheek and her eyebrows full of it.

Of course she was not as pleasing a picture to contemplate as Gertie in her pretty buff dress and clean linen collar, with her face bright and fresh and smooth as marble. And Godfrey took pleasure in looking at her, and complimented her for her freshness, and said dissipation did her good, and she ought to try it oftener.

Alice was in horrible spirits, and scarcely spoke at all, while Julia, who had a headache, was not much better. Both were fagged out, and after breakfast announced their intention to keep their rooms the entire morning.

"But I thought we were to have a sail up the river, and call at the Piersons'," Godfrey said; and Alice, to whom the remark was addressed, replied, snappishly:

"I've changed my mind and do not care to go. You can take Gertie. I daresay that will suit you better."

"Certainly it will," Godfrey answered, accepting the gauntlet she threw down; and, going at once to Gertie, he explained that he and Robert and his sisters were going to call upon the Misses Pierson, and he would like her to accompany them.

Of all the people in the neighbourhood the Piersons had been the most polite to Gertie, and she signified at once her willingness to go. Ten was the hour fixed upon, but before that time came Alice had changed her mind, and when Godfrey and Robert joined the ladies upon the piazza, preparatory to starting, they found Miss Creighton with them, her face a little brighter and herself very anxious about her fluted dress, which she was afraid would be all crumpled with so many in the boat.

Gertie understood her, but paid no attention to the hint, and of all the party seemed to enjoy the sail and the call the most.

The Misses Pierson were glad to see them, and kept them till after luncheon, when Godfrey hurried them to the boat, pointing out a mass of thunder-clouds in the west, and saying they must get home before the shower. There was ample time for it, he said, when the Misses Pierson suggested that they should wait, and as a delightful breeze had sprung up and the sun was under a cloud, the sail on the river-bade fair to be much pleasanter than it had been earlier in the day.

But for once Godfrey miscalculated, and though he and Robert rowed with all their strength they were but little more than half way when the first rain-drops began to fall, and in a few moments the storm was upon them in peals of thunder and dashes of rain and gusts of wind which rocked the boat from side to side and made Alice cry out with fear as she sprang up to avoid a wave which came splashing in and wetted her fluted dress.

"Keep quiet, Alice, or you'll upset the boat," Godfrey said, sternly.

Alice began to cry, and whimpered that her dress was spoiled, and said some of them ought not to have come; there were too many in the boat, and she knew it all the while.

Godfrey did not ask "Why didn't you stay out then?" but Julia did, and then Alice cried the harder, and wrung her hands in fear as peal after peal of thunder rolled over their heads and crashed up the mountain side, while the lurid lightning, flash after flash, broke through the inky sky, and blinding sheets of rain and wind swept down the river, threatening each moment to engulf the boat, as yet riding the waves so bravely.

It was a terrible storm, and seemed to increase each moment, while the white faces looked at each other anxiously, and the pale lips made no sound until Godfrey's oar snapped in two, and a huge wave carried it far out upon the angry waters.

Then Alice shrieked "We are lost! we shall all be drowned! Oh, if I had stayed at home!" and bounding up to clutch at the side she did not know what she lost her balance and fell heavily across one side of the boat, which was instantly upset, and six human beings were struggling madly in the river.

"Godfrey! Godfrey!" two voices called above the storm, one loud, piercing and peremptory as if it had the right, the other tender, beseeching and low, as of a spirit going out into the darkness and saying a farewell to one it had loved so fondly.

Two voices called "Godfrey! Godfrey!" above the storm, but Godfrey heard only one, and, freeing himself from something which held him fast, and which in his mad excitement he did not know was a pair of clinging hands, he struck out wildly for the place whence came the mournful cry, and where, just above the water, he caught one glimpse of a white, scared face and tresses of long bright hair disappearing from his sight.

Something told him that twice that face and hair had been beneath the waters, where only death and darkness reigned, that if they disappeared again it was for ever, and with a courage and energy born of love and despair he came to the spot, and plunging his hand beneath the wave reached for the long bright hair, felt it, clutched it firmly, and drew again into view the pallid face on which the hue of death had settled, and, winding his arm firmly about the slender waist, struck for the shore, which was fortunately so near that his feet soon touched the bottom, and he struggled up the bank with his unconscious burden.

Laying it gently down, and pressing one burning kiss upon the white face, he turned to retrace his steps, for a thought of Alice and his sisters had come over him, but when he saw them at some little distance down the river, struggling on their feet, he went back to Gertie, who lay in the same death-like swoon, with her hands folded upon her breast and a sweet smile wreathing her lips as if her last thought had been one of peace and happiness.

Was she dead, and, if so, in dying did she know whose arms were around her?—ay, were around her now as Godfrey lifted her up, and, wringing the water from her hair, held her dear head upon his breast, while he showered kiss after kiss upon her, murmuring as he did so:

"Gertie, my darling, my darling, you cannot, you must not be dead. Oh, Gertie, my precious one, open those eyes on me once, and hear me tell how much I love you."

But the eyes did not unclose, nor the lips give forth a sound, and without knowing to whom he spoke, or stopping to think who was standing by him, he said, so sadly:

"My Gertie is dead."

There was a rain of tears upon his face as he spoke, and a look of anguish in his eyes, but he met with no answering sympathy from the motionless figure.

Alice, who stood there drenched to the skin, the fluting and the starch all out of her dress, the crimp all out of her hair, the powder washed from her face, and the fire of a hundred volcanoes in the eyes, gazed pitilessly upon the unconscious Gertie, while a smile of bitter scorn curled her lips and intense anger sounded in her voice as she said:

"Godfrey Schuyler, from this moment our paths diverge. I have had sufficient proof of how little you care for me. I can have no faith in one who deliberately thrusts aside his promised wife to save the life of another. You did this, Godfrey Schuyler, when you knew I was drowning, and I hate you for it, and give you back your freedom with your ring."

Alice's temper had increased with every word she uttered, and, snatching off the superb diamond selected by herself, she threw it toward Godfrey, who, stunned and bewildered, did not at first realize what she was saying or what she meant by it.

He had a faint recollection of being clutched by somebody in the water and freeing himself from the grasp, but he did not know it was Alice, who, when she realized that he was putting her from him, felt that all hope was gone until Julia's voice called out:

"Cling to the boat, Alice; cling to the boat, as I am doing."

The next she knew she was clinging to the boat, to which she and Julia held until aid came from two boatmen who had been near them on the river when the accident occurred, and who took them safely to the shore, which Robert had reached before them with Emma at his side!

Julia had been deserted too, and though Robert had not put her from him he had made no effort to save her, but had grasped her sister's arm and said, in her hearing:

"Don't be afraid, Emma, darling, the shore is very near; keep your head above the water and I will not let you drown."

But for the name "Emma" Julia might have fancied he made a mistake, but that settled it beyond a doubt, and a pain like the cut of a knife ran through her heart as she held to the side of the boat, and saw her sister borne away by one whom she had appropriated to herself so long.

Once safe upon the land she went to the spot where Robert stood wringing the water from her sister's dress, and then, overcome with nervous terror and bitter disappointment, she uttered a low cry and fell half fainting upon the sand.

Ordinarily Alice would have stopped and helped her, but her interest was centred in that other group, farther up the river, and making her way thither she reached them in time to hear Godfrey's words:

"Open your eyes on me once more and hear me tell how much I love you!"

And he who said this was her promised husband, and she to whom he said it an obscure girl whom, a few weeks since, Alice would have thought it impossible for one in Godfrey's position really to love. Even now she could not believe him in earnest, but there were bitter anger and resentment in her heart, prompting her in the heat of her passion to give him back his freedom with the ring, which, striking against his shoulder, bounded off and fell on Gertie's death-white face.

"Don't you hurt her," Godfrey said, softly, as he picked up the ring and turned it over in his hand while a perception of the truth began to dawn upon him. "What did you say?" he asked.

And Alice replied:

"I told you you were free to love your Gertie all you please, and I meant it too, for I hate you."

"Thank you, Alice, thank you so much, only it has come too late," Godfrey replied, and, slipping the ring on Gertie's cold finger, he continued: "See, it fits, and I'd rather have it there on her dead hand than on the hand of any woman living; but it is there too late, too late."

Was he going crazy because of that pale girl lying there in a state so near resembling death that it was not strange for the eye of love to be mistaken?

Alice did not know, but something in his voice and manner roused the little womanly sympathy she had remaining in her then, and she said to him, sharply:

"I tell you she is not dead. Why should she die now? It is only a faint, but she ought to have care. Take her somewhere, can't you? or let these men do it for you."

Then she turned to the boatmen who had saved her own and Julia's life, and who had now come up with offers of assistance.

"She must be seen to; she's in a swoon," they said, pointing to Gertie. "Shall we carry her to the town?"

But Godfrey would not let them touch her, and, buoyed up with hope which gave him strength, he gathered the limp form in his arms and ran rather than walked toward the village.

Our house stands at the entrance of the town just on the brow of the hill, and as the storm was over I had opened the door to let in the cool, sweet air when I saw the strange procession coming—Godfrey with something in his arms, which I at first mistook for a child, so small it looked and so closely he held it to him, Alice following after, more like a mermaid in appearance than the ruffled and fluted and furbelowed young lady whom I was wont to see, and the two boatmen bringing up the rear with Godfrey's hat and Alice's parasol.

"What is it, Godfrey?" I asked, as I went out to meet him, and when I saw what it was I bade him bring her in at once, for there was no time to lose.

So he brought her in and laid her on my bed, and then, while one of the men went for the doctor we did for her all we had heard must be done for the drowning, and with such good result that when the doctor came the patient had already shown signs of returning consciousness, and the breath was plainly perceptible through the pale lips, whose first word was:

"Godfrey, save me!"

She thought herself still in the river, and then Godfrey, unmindful of us all, and caring little that

just outside the door Alice watched and waited, bent over her, and said:

"I am here, darling; I have saved you!"

She put up both her arms and wound them round him with a convulsive clasp, while Alice came a step nearer and stood within the room. She had changed her saturated clothes for a suit of mine, and with a shawl wrapped about her stood, with a white face and chattering teeth, watching Godfrey as he unclasped the hands from his neck and rubbed them with his own, and rubbed the fair, white arms, and the pale forehead, and smoothed the long, damp hair, and gave the restoratives, until the blue eyes unclosed and looked at him with something more than recognition in their glance. Then Godfrey was persuaded to leave her and don the dry garments of my brother, which had been waiting for him in an adjoining room.

As he passed out he stumbled over a little crumpled figure sitting upon a stool just inside the door, and looking down upon it he saw that it was Alice.

"Why, Allie," he exclaimed; "I thought you had gone home! Have you been here all the time?"

"Yes, Godfrey, all the time!" and a tear stood in Alice's eyelashes, and her voice was not much like the voice which an hour before had said, so bitterly, "I hate you."

Alice never harboured resentment long, and her heart was very sore as she recalled the scene on the river bank, and wondered if Godfrey had taken her hot, angry words in earnest and felt himself free from her. He could not—he must not—he was not free. He had been hers for years, and though she did not know what love was in its full extent she had a pride in him and a liking for him such as she had never felt for any other man, and as she sat there by the door and watched him bending over the still form on the bed she was conscious of a new sensation throbbing through her heart, and when he passed her on his way out she could hardly restrain herself from clutching his knees and suing him for pardon. She did not mean what she said when in her madness she had set him free, and threw him back his ring—the ring now flashing on Gertie's hand, and making me wonder whence it came, and if Tom Barton could have been the giver.

Alice knew where it was, and watched it with a strange gleam in her eyes, while a resolution was forming in her mind. The ring was hers, and she would have it; and, rising from her seat, she went swiftly to the bedside, and, seizing Gertie's hand, wrenched the ring from the unresisting finger and placed it on her own.

The act must have hurt Gertie, for she winced, and, opening her eyes, said:

"Is it you, Miss Creighton? Are you all safe?"

Alice did not reply; she had heard the sound of wheels, and hastened out to meet Mr. Schuyler and Edith, who had come to take her and Gertie home.

Julia had recovered from her half-faint, and supported by Robert and Emma, who was only frightened and wet, had walked home, and gone at once to her room, where she was attended by her maid; while Emma and Robert explained what had happened, and told where the rest of the party could be found.

Greatly alarmed at the account given of Gertie, Edith had come at once to find her and take her home, if possible; but this neither the doctor nor myself thought advisable. It was better for her to remain quietly where she was for a few days, and so the carriage returned without her, Edith promising to come again the next morning and see how she was.

(To be continued.)

THE VIENNA EXPOSITION.—There is still in hand 277,710, which added to the 2,681,627 florins paid back to the Government will still leave a deficit of nearly 12 millions. Notwithstanding this addition to the national debt, very little is said about it, as the people of Vienna, and of Austria generally, are proud of having had the greatest and most interesting exhibition which has ever yet been held, and which, they are persuaded, cannot be surpassed in the future.

CAMPBELL WOOD.—This wood promises to become, at no distant day, a very valuable and important article of commerce. It grows freely in tropical countries, without cultivation, and especially thrives near the sea-coast, where it may be easily obtained for shipment. It attains large proportions, being sometimes found fifteen feet and upwards in diameter, and of proportionate height. It is very valuable for carpenters' work, being light, durable, and not liable to injury from insects. Its aromatic, agreeable perfume is also well known. The wood is strong and very durable, and is especially applicable for ship-building, and may be applied to all purposes for which teak wood is used. Campbell wood piles have

been known to remain in a good state of preservation over a hundred years.

WHO IS HE?

By the Author of "Lord Dane's Error," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XX.

MEANWHILE Sir Robert and Lady Calthorpe, who had remained at home, were entertaining an unlooked-for visitor—Esther Mount.

Esther Mount looked as if London agreed with her. She was handsomer than usual, and looked younger by years than when Sir Robert and Lady Cattie had seen her last. She was dressed richly and becomingly, and her large gray eyes seemed to have softened somehow from that hard and stern expression so habitual to them before.

She smiled rather queerly at Lady Cattie's surprise at her changed looks. Then she sat down, and still with that odd smile addressed Sir Robert:

"You never asked me who was the uncle I was going to, Sir Robert, when I left Kirston Wood."

"I beg your pardon, indeed," said the baronet, "I fancied you did not wish to be questioned."

Esther Mount smiled again.

"My uncle is called Sir Grenville Trevor."

A gasp of surprise from both the baronet and his wife followed this announcement. Both grew pale for a moment.

Then they smiled faintly. Was not Miss Mount one of them?

"My uncle wishes me to marry his son," Esther Mount went on, looking slowly from one to the other—a look which Sir Robert and his wife met, before which, after an instant, their bold, hard eyes dropped, while over the faces of all there crept a swift and indescribable agitation.

Esther broke the dead silence that followed.

"Well," she said, coldly, "you do not speak. Am I to understand that you disapprove of cousins marrying—is that it? However, whether you disapprove for that or any other reason is no matter since it is I who am to marry him, and not you."

Lady Cattie's strange eyes looked at her suddenly.

"Will you marry him, Esther?"

"Yes."

Sir Robert and Lady Cattie exchanged glances. There were both fear and questioning in those glances. Both indeed were bewildered, stupefied as it were, by this sudden turn of affairs.

"Are you—have you—have you forgotten?" Lady Cattie began, stammering in a very unusual manner for her.

"I have forgotten Maurice Champion—yes," Esther Mount said, facing them both unflinchingly. "Bertrand Trevor is rich. The family all wish it. You ought to wish it."

Sir Robert and his wife looked at each other again.

Then Lady Cattie smiled and extended her hand.

"We wish anything that is for your happiness, my dear," she said; "can you doubt it?"

Lady Isabel had come home from her drive. Her eyes were glittering feverishly as she entered the mansion, but otherwise she seemed her usual cold, stately self.

Crawley came close behind her, scowling savagely when he thought the footman was not looking.

My lady went straight to her own apartments.

Crawley went—not to his own chambers, nor to Sir Robert's. He looked into one of the drawing-rooms, but did not sit down, either there or in the library, nor yet in the smoking-room. Beyond this latter apartment was a small room, used in winter to store the wood which was burned in the larger chamber. It was not much more than a closet, but there was one window opening upon an empty and little used court.

Crawley went into this room, shut and locked the door, and opened the window. There was a chair here. He threw himself upon it and sat glaring gloomily out of the window.

"It would be easy enough," he soliloquized, "if he were out of the way, and I wish he was. I'm tired of being bullied by him, and I know how he'll go on when he finds I didn't keep those two from seeing each other. I wish I knew where he kept his drops and I'd give him a bigger dose than he did Maurice the first."

He took out a cigar, but sat still without lighting it for some time yet.

"If he were out of the way," he mused again, "I could take my own time for the rest of the business, and in the end be the only master here."

This man, with his strange resemblance to a good and lofty-souled man, seemed not to have one noble or redeeming trait in his character. He was false in his heart even to his confederate, Sir Robert, and had he seen a way open to do so safely would have destroyed him with as little compunction as he had

stamped the life out of that one of Lady Cathorpe's mice.

The strange household all met in state at dinner. They usually dined together; breakfast Lady Isabel took in her own apartment.

Sir Robert had managed to get a word with Crawley just before dinner, and he knew that my lady had seen Bertrand Trevor.

He watched her furtively during dinner to see if he could read in the beautiful white face any sign that she too had been affected by that resemblance to her lost husband which he was reluctantly compelled to own to himself, and which puzzled him with a nameless fear, notwithstanding the lightness with which he affected to treat the subject to Crawley. But he obtained no satisfaction there. Lady Isabel had schooled herself too thoroughly. Save that she was paler than ever, if possible, there was nothing unusual in her appearance.

Lady Cathorpe mentioned casually during dinner that she had seen Esther Mount, and what she had heard from her. But even at this mention of Miss Mount, for whom she had conceived a violent aversion, Lady Isabel displayed neither interest nor emotion.

But that night, when she had got to her rooms and was alone with Mrs. Craven, Lady Isabel showed her a small key.

"It unlocks a door which none of these people know of," she said, with an intrepid and determined look, "a door which leads into the garden and from that into a back street."

She smiled faintly at Mrs. Craven's amazement.

"You don't think I was going to live among these vipers without a means of escape from them always in my hands? Listen to me. To-night Sir Robert and Lady Cattie go out for the usual parties. They have a number of engagements to keep. The other goes somewhere else. He always goes out in the evening, you know, and at any rate no one is likely to come to look after me. They did not urge me to go with them either, and that in itself is significant. Now then. At eleven o'clock I shall go out at the door which this key unlocks. You will remain here and watch my boy till I come back."

Mrs. Craven had listened without any especial excitement until this moment. Now she began to tremble as with an ague.

"Where are you going, my lady?" she asked.

"That I shall not tell you. But no harm shall come to you I promise. I will be back before two hours certainly; and meanwhile you will have the key of my apartments in your pocket, and if any one should come you can pretend not to hear."

Mrs. Craven said no more, but her looks were full of terror and uncontrollable apprehension.

At eleven Lady Isabel attired herself in a black dress of a soft woollen material that would not rustle, and wrapped herself about with a long-hooded cloak which completely hid her. She took also a thick veil. Then she kissed her boy and afterward inserted the key she had shown Mrs. Craven in a concealed lock behind a full-length portrait of her father which was there. The picture swung inward, a narrow flight of stairs appeared. She passed through and shut the door behind her.

A little distance beyond the steps terminated into an opening, overgrown and concealed by a thick growth of ivy.

She emerged into the garden, skirted that, keeping in the shadow of the wall until she reached a door at the farther side which opened upon a back street. Passing through this, she was soon in an avenue, through which carriages were rattling at frequent intervals. After a moment's hesitation she boldly signalled a cab at a crossing and, entering, gave the driver an address in a low voice.

It was that of Sir Grenville Trevor's town house.

It was only a few squares away, and the cab came to its destination very shortly. Alighting, Lady Isabel bade the man wait, and ran up the broad and shining marble steps. She might have been fearfully agitated but there was no sign of that in her bearing, no tremour in the white little hand that rang the bell for admittance here at this strange hour.

The aristocratic portal swung back almost instantly. A solitary footman presented himself, but some of his fellows could be seen farther back.

She gave him a sealed note, which she had brought, bidding him take it to his young master. It was directed "Bertrand Trevor."

The man was too well trained to show surprise in his looks, and, giving one of his fellows a nod, he departed. Strange to say not a doubt had crossed the mind of Lady Isabel that she should find him at home whom she came to see. It chanced that he had remained in on this evening. Sir Grenville had gone out with the ladies.

The footman returned, and with a suppressed excitement in his manner, and a vast accession of respect, requested the veiled and muffled figure to

follow him. He conducted her to a small but elegant room on an upper floor, and left her there. She was alone.

Lady Isabel sat down without even removing her veil. Her hand under her cloak was pressed convulsively to her side.

There was an interval of loneliness and silence. Lady Isabel wondered if he too were waiting to calm some mighty agitation before he could face her.

In a moment more that doubt was settled.

The door opened. A gentleman came in, carrying the note Lady Isabel had given the footman. He was very pale. He stopped at sight of the muffled figure sitting there waiting for him, and his dark-blue eyes fastened upon it with an intensity of scrutiny that seemed as if it would burn through the veil which still covered my lady's face.

Lady Isabel did not stir at first. She literally could not. But in a moment she put up a shaking hand and undid her veil, rising slowly at the same time.

Bertrand Trevor came forward. He was pale as death. He bowed low.

"Have I the pleasure of beholding Lady Isabel Champion?" The note told me so.

Lady Isabel did not speak. Her shaking hands tore a moment at the fastening of her cloak, then, failing to master it, she fiercely pushed the hood off her face, back upon her shoulders, and went up close to him. She lifted her face till it almost touched his. Her eyes gleamed so it seemed that they must blind him with their brightness.

"Maurice," she said, "for Heaven's sake don't speak to me in that way. Don't look at me so."

Bertrand Trevor did not move—did not turn his glance at first. He stood still as she had approached him, his handsome head slightly bent, an eager, intent, excited look on his face. Then with a long, laboured respiration he drew himself erect again.

"My lady," he said, "had you not better sit down? I will send for your husband if you wish."

Lady Isabel looked at him a moment. Then a sort of hysteric sound between a laugh and a moan—a dreadful cry—broke from her lips.

"Do you think I don't know you?" she cried. "You might stay away from me twenty years and I'd know you the same. I do know you. Oh, great Heaven, do you mean to deny me?"

Again that struggling, intent look crossed Bertrand Trevor's deathly face.

"Lady Champion," he said, slowly, "if you will sit down I will do anything for you that I can. See, you are trembling so that you can scarcely stand."

He spoke kindly, he took both her hands in his, and strove to conduct her to a seat. His face was contracted with pain, the agony in her voice and looks pierced him like a knife. She resisted him. She stood and looked at him in dead, terrible silence, her hands turning to ice in his, her face growing whiter every moment, the only look of life in the fixed and flaming eyes.

Bertrand Trevor reached and touched the bell-rope with one hand.

A servant entered.

"Some wine" was all the master said, and the man ran to get it.

Lady Isabel pushed it aside when it came.

She touched the waiting-man with her finger.

"Do you know me?" she asked, and the man, though shrinking somewhat from her white face and glowing eyes, answered, at once:

"Yes, my lady, if you please."

"Who am I?"

"You are Lady Isabel Champion."

"And who is he?" pointing to his master.

"Mr. Bertrand Trevor, my lady."

"How long have you known him by that name?"

The man glanced at his master—a queer look. He was an old man, and had been in the family most of his life, having gone to Australia and returned with them. Perhaps he was thinking of those rumours which were abroad in London touching my lady's sanity. He looked back at Lady Isabel.

"How long? Always, my lady," he said.

"It is false," she cried, "and you know it is false. Leave the room."

The man hesitated. Perhaps he thought my lady was growing madder every moment—but his master made a slight gesture with his hand. The man left the room.

Lady Isabel remained standing. She continued to gaze at Bertrand Trevor.

If she had been a woman of ordinary strength of mind she would perhaps have lost her senses under the weight of that horrible mystery which shrouded her like a pall, and which seemed only to grow deeper and blacker with every step she took toward its solution.

She spoke at last. She addressed him once more, in a calmer yet still unnatural voice.

"I know that you are my husband. I know that you are my lost Maurice. An angel could not shake

me in that knowledge," she said. "An angel could scarcely have made me believe you would ever look upon me as you do now. An angel could not have made me believe you false and wicked. I can scarcely believe the evidence of my own senses now. I had rather know myself mad, I think, than to believe what I am compelled to believe of you this moment—that you could from any motive whatever, or under any influence however terrible, forswear your wife and deny your child. I am surrounded on every side by the web you and your confederates—as I must conclude them to be—have woven about me, but I do not despair yet of piercing it, and while I live I will never cease to try."

Bertrand Trevor stood utterly silent while Lady Isabel spoke. He scarcely seemed to breathe, so intently he listened. Her words were the words of madness doubtless, but her manner, her looks, her tones were those of a sane and loving woman, whose heart and life had somehow been horribly outraged.

"I wish you would see my cousin, Lady Champion," he said, presently; "she is in the house. May I send for her?"

"Yes. I should like to see all my enemies. She is another, if she calls herself your cousin."

Bertrand rang and gave the order in a low voice. Lady Isabel waited.

Swift steps sounded outside almost instantly. There was the rustle of a silk train, and the cousin came in.

It was Esther Mount.

Both women looked confounded.

Miss Mount had only been told that Bertrand had sent for her.

Lady Isabel remembered suddenly what she had heard at dinner.

Esther Mount looked the most overcome for the moment, but, glancing from Bertrand's perplexed face to Lady Isabel's despairing one, she rallied again, and faced the latter with almost open defiance.

Lady Isabel gazed at her in horror.

"Can it be true then?" she murmured, half to herself. "Why are you here, Esther?" she asked.

"I am in my uncle's house. I am here at his invitation, a welcome guest. Is it not so, my cousin?"

She appealed to Bertrand.

"It is true, my lady," Bertrand answered.

Lady Isabel turned to him, the horror in her eyes deepening.

"Do you tell me this woman is your cousin?"

"She is the daughter of my mother's sister, Lady Champion."

My lady's fine lip curled with bitterness.

"I was told you and she were to marry. I did not give it a thought then, I can't believe it now. Is it true?"

"My father wishes it. It is a plan of my father's. Esther and I have not come to any agreement," Bertrand answered, with a visible reluctance.

As she heard him a sort of shudder ran through the frame of this unhappy lady who had borne so much already. She shivered and shrank as before a death blow.

Then she lifted her blanched face once more. The despair in her eyes was frightful to see. The compassion and bewilderment of Bertrand Trevor's looks were stranger still.

Lady Isabel watched him a moment.

"The longer I am with him," she murmured to herself, "the more like a stranger he seems to me, and yet I know he is my lost Maurice."

She had not glanced at Miss Mount again since the first.

Now she took her veil from a chair and pulled the hood of her cloak up again.

Without looking at either, or speaking again, she quitted her room and left the house.

As she rode back toward Plantagenet Square in the cab which had waited as ordered Lady Isabel was too preoccupied to tell the man where to stop. But, fortunately, he had remembered where he had taken her up, and halted at the same spot.

It was a bright night, and the man scrutinized her sharply as he let her out. He was very much surprised at the haughtiness with which she drew back when he touched her shoulder to remind her that she had not paid him. My lady had forgotten that. She had not even brought her purse with her. She glanced hurriedly at her hands. She had worn jewels lately at the command of her triad of tyrants. She pulled off a ring, gave it to the man, and darted away. He would have followed her, but even he could see that he had got a prize by the glitter of the jewel, and carefully bestowing it in a safe place he remounted his box, muttering his wonder and glee.

Lady Isabel returned as she had come, going through the garden and thence by the ivy-covered passage to her own apartments.

Mrs. Craven was waiting for her with a patient but very white face. No one had come near her. No one knew that Lady Champion had been away.

My lady removed her cloak and showed her ghastly face, set in its masses of braided hair like some lovely ghost's picture in a frame. Her large black eyes still shone with that wild and awful glitter that had come into them while she talked with Bertrand Trevor.

"I have seen my husband," she said, rapidly, in answer to Mrs. Craven's inquiring looks. "You are always right, my dear, though you are such a coward. My husband lives. That was he you saw this morning. But he is like all the rest. He belongs to my enemies."

"My lady!" cried Mrs. Craven, staring with all the might of her pale eyes at the excitement and ghastliness of her mistress's beautiful face.

My lady wrung her white hands.

"It is too true. My little boy has only you, and me, and Heaven for his friends now."

"My lady, you are hasty in condemning. If your husband is your enemy, and this is he, why did they not let you see him this morning? why are they manifestly so afraid of him? and why was he so triumphant when I pretended Mr. Trevor did not look like any one I know?"

"That is true."

"And you say I am always right, my lady. Believe me then when I tell you this, whoever this man is you have seen to-night, however black appearances may be against your husband, he is a good and true gentleman, or this other would not hate and fear him so."

A bitter and incredulous smile crossed my lady's perfect lips.

"It is my husband whom I have seen to-night! If I could have traced in his face one sign that he was not entirely in his right mind I would have believed him insane, or drugged as I was once, sooner than false to me. But he was calm, gentle, self-possessed, kind, like his own self, only much graver and sadder. Perhaps his conscience troubles him. Now look at me. I am in my right mind, am I not, so far as you can see? Yes. Therefore I cannot be mistaken. I am not mad, nor is he. Therefore it is true that he is false to me."

"It is a mystery—I am sure it is only a mystery," muttered Mrs. Craven. "If you could only get behind it you would find that your husband loves you yet."

CHAPTER XXI.

As Crawley was coming from some haunt of his that night a man met him almost at the door of the house in Plantagenet Square and gave him a sealed note.

He read it as soon as he got in.

It was from Esther Mount.

"Lady Isabel Champion has just been here to see Mr. Bertrand Trevor," it read. "She says he is her husband. She claims him as such to his face. She went away with mischief in her eyes. Dispose of her soon, or she will dispose of you!"

Crawley crumpled the note.

"That jade Bess must have helped her," he muttered. "But I'll soon know."

He went to the library and rang the bell and sent for Mrs. Craven.

The man came back saying that Lady Isabel would not let her come.

Crawley had been drinking before he came in, and he had taken some brandy since.

He cursed the man for not bringing her, and, rushing past him, went himself after the woman he had so long considered his bond slave.

The door of my lady's apartment was closed and locked. He knocked at it in vain. No one came in answer to the summons. Then he called to Mrs. Craven, and finally, in his rage, he fell to beating the stout oaken door with his fists and kicking it with his feet.

Sir Robert came home in the midst, and found him thus engaged. He forced him away with some difficulty.

Meanwhile, within, Mrs. Craven was cowering upon the floor at Lady Isabel's feet, shuddering and moaning, and begging alternately to let go to him, or he'd murder her, and then to be protected from him.

Lady Isabel watched her calmly. Then as the uproar ceased, in consequence of Sir Robert's interference, she said:

"Now then, Mrs. Craven, you belong to me. You are no slave of his. You know he'd murder you the next time he sets eyes on you. You'd better trust me, and I'll save you."

She shuddered more violently than ever, but she ceased to moan aloud.

"I want your secret now, Mrs. Craven, and I mean to have it," my lady said, in calm, decisive tones.

"You shall tell me what and who this man is—why you fear him so."

"I can't tell you," Mrs. Craven said, desperately.

"You can and shall. I know part. You talk in your sleep sometimes, and I have heard you. I can almost tell you what this man has done. He has killed some one, and you saw him do it."

Mrs. Craven started up suddenly, tall, and straight, and white as a ghost, and wringing her thin hands in a most pitiful way.

"Oh, oh, how did you know? He'll kill me; I know he will!"

"He can't—he shan't," repeated Lady Isabel.

"Come now, tell me the whole story. You hate him I know. You hate him worse than I do even. Show me how to do it, and I'll soon put him where he can harm neither of us. It was a man—I know so much—and he did it for money, and you saw him, and he swore he'd kill you if you ever told. But where did all this happen? You shall tell me. If you don't I swear to you that I'll go to him myself and tell him what I know, and he'll think you have told, so what will you gain?"

My lady moved toward the door as she spoke, with a stern and determined light in her beautiful eyes.

Mrs. Craven followed, and caught her back, convulsively.

"I'll tell you all," she said, "but not here. We're neither of us safe here after your knowing so much, my lady. It's no use keeping it back. He thinks I've told now. We must get the boy up and dress him, and run away. It's the only way left."

"I am quite ready for that," Lady Isabel said, quietly. "In fact I have been making my preparations for it some time."

She went and opened the deep-carved chest, of which she alone had the key, and took out one after another the following articles:

First, an old lady's black bombazine bonnet, dress, shawl, veil, a pair of green spectacles, and a pair of black silk gloves.

Second, a dress of brown alpaca, a brown hat and thick veil, and gloves to match, a wig of yellow hair, a pair of false yellow eyebrows, a bottle of rouge, and a box of pearl powder.

Third, a girl's suit of plaid.

Lady Isabel put on the brown suit, and then superintended Mrs. Craven while she donned the bombazine. She tied a black cap over Mrs. Craven's white hair before she put the bonnet on her head, thus completely concealing those tale-telling tresses. Then she dipped a camel's hair brush in some dye she had ready, and changed the hue of the snow-white eyebrows.

Lastly, to make doubly sure, she tied on the green spectacles.

"You wouldn't know who it was if you were to meet yourself suddenly," Lady Isabel said, triumphantly, as she led the trembling woman to the glass.

Mrs. Craven almost smiled.

"I don't think I should," she said.

"And you'll get used to the glasses, so you won't mind. I don't know of anything that alters any one so much as a pair of spectacles."

Before she finished her own transformation Lady Isabel went and waked her little boy, and brought him in to see what she was about, calling it a frolic to him.

Coiling her own thick braids close about her head, she put on the wig of yellow hair, and dextrously fastened the false eyebrows over that silky black arch which was one of the charming features of her lovely face. She used the pearl powder with a liberal hand and the rouge with a skilful one.

When she was through the change was nearly as complete as in Mrs. Craven's case. Rouge and white on a naturally colourless and dark face make a wonderful difference, and the yellow hair and eyebrows completed the transformation.

My lady was almost gay as she turned from the contemplation of herself to young Hugh.

The boy's hair was long and wavy. She parted it in the centre and arranged it in ringlets.

The child made some objection to the girl's dress, but yielded obediently as he always did to his mother's wishes, and soon seemed to enter into the affair as a pretty play. When his gipsy bonnet, with scarlet flowers under the brim and a bunch of ribbons outside, was tied over his girlish curls he did look a pretty and mischievous sprite.

My lady had got ready a few necessities, which she carried herself, and Mrs. Craven was supplied with an old lady's reticule, which held a few more.

She had provided herself with ample money in shape to put in a small space, and having at the very last tied on her own brown hat and veil, she unlocked the door behind the portrait, the three passed through, and my lady locked it and secured the key about her person. She had previously unlooked that other door by which her apartments communicated with the rest of the house in order that when they

were missed in the morning it might be supposed they had gone through the house.

It was near dawn by this time, and many vehicles were already rattling through the streets, among them now and then a hansom cab.

My lady, after a brief and imperious consultation with Mrs. Craven, signalled one of the latter, and they all entered and were driven to the railway.

There was an early express both ways, as my lady had taken pains to inform herself. The one for the North left first, but they were so early that they had to wait a little for that.

My lady walked about with a thoughtful look in her deep eyes while she waited, and Hugh fell asleep, with his ringleted head in a window-seat. Mrs. Craven kept her thick veil down and did nothing but quiver every time a step approached the waiting-room. She would have gone back even then and surrendered herself to that fiend she had run away from, so complete was his control of her; but a superior will had taken her destinies in charge. She had no power to resist the fate of her beautiful and imperious mistress, even if she had not adored her as she did with all the worship her weak nature was capable of.

Their train came presently. They entered one of the carriages, a bell rang, then another, and the train moved off.

Mrs. Craven drew a breath of deep relief and put her veil off her face for the first time.

"You may take off your spectacles too," Lady Isabel suggested, "there is no one here to see you."

But Mrs. Craven shook her head.

"Very well, keep them on, if you like, though I should think you would want to rest your eyes from that green glare. Are you ready now to tell me where we are going exactly, and what we shall find there?"

Mrs. Craven shuddered and shook her head, then pointed at the tickets in her lady's hand.

"They are for Dorset," answered Lady Isabel, impatiently. "You said it was beyond there—a fishing town, ten miles on."

Mrs. Craven nodded.

"Is it there? Yes? Will you tell me all when I get there? Will you put in my hands those absolute proofs of the villain's guilt—proofs which can hang him?"

Mrs. Craven's lips moved. They uttered no sound; but my lady understood her. She compressed her firm, scarlet lips tightly.

"I hope it is so!" she murmured to herself. "It will be one home blow struck toward cutting his web of horror and mystery, of which the evil one himself seems to have superintended the weaving."

It was a long ride, the whole of that day and into the following night.

They stopped at the little town for which they had taken tickets for the night.

There was only an old-fashioned inn, with comfortable accommodations, and, impatient as she was, Lady Isabel insisted on resting there.

Mrs. Craven entreated strangely enough that they might go on, but my lady was firm.

"Your nerves are all unstrung, and you're a dreadful coward at your best," she told her. "Beside, Hugh needs sleep."

"Do you think, my lady," questioned Mrs. Craven, "that the man you bought the tickets of would remember us if he were asked by—any one?"

"Certainly not, and if he should no one is likely to be looking for an old lady in spectacles, a young one with yellow hair, and a little girl."

Mrs. Craven did not seem reassured, however, even when Lady Isabel reminded her energetically that there was no train in which they could be followed to this remote quarter for twenty-four hours. She kept her stand by the one window of their sitting-room which fronted the main entrance of the inn, and watched till Lady Isabel nearly dragged her away and made her go to bed.

"What are you afraid of?" my lady questioned, impatiently.

"I'm afraid of him—yes, I am," responded Mrs. Craven, turning her ghastly face and hollow, foreboding eyes upon Lady Isabel. "You're not afraid, you do not know him—you don't know how clever he is nor how suspicious. He might have been watching and seen us leave the house. He might have come with us all the way from London by the same train, and be out there in the darkness this moment, contriving how he shall murder us."

Strong served as she was, Lady Isabel could not help an inward shudder at the woman's words. The creature's terror was contagious in spite of her efforts. Just then both fancied they heard steps approaching the passage outside. A hand seemed to grasp for the latch of the door and then try it gently.

Lady Isabel felt herself grow cold, and Mrs. Craven nearly shrieked aloud in her fear.

(To be continued.)



WON AT LAST.

FOXMERE HOUSE stood in a lovely valley, and at the time our story opens the family residing there consisted of three persons, whom we shall now introduce to the reader.

The head of the house, Mason Foxmere, was a man of some sixty years of age. His wife had died many years before, leaving him an only child, a son, who was now in his twenty-third year.

Basil Foxmere was all that a father's heart could wish. Fair and comely to look upon, with a brave and noble disposition, he was a credit to the house as well as to all of the country side.

People liked him far and near, and said that he would be eclipsed by none of his race. His friends were legion, and if he had an enemy he hardly knew it.

He was a far greater favourite than his father had been with the country people in these later years, for the senior Foxmere had grown stern with age, and was impatient of anything that opposed his wishes.

The other inmate of the Foxmere mansion was a young lady of nearly Basil's age—Helen Allison by name.

She was a distant relative of the Foxmeres, and for a number of years had made her home with them.

She had no nearer friends than they. Her father and mother had long since died, and brothers and sisters she had none. So when Mason Foxmere offered her a home his offer was gladly accepted by the almost friendless girl.

She did not come there as an object of charity. Property had been left her by her father, and this her new protector held in trust for her.

As time went on one thing grew to become a more and more desired object with Mason Foxmere.

It was to see Basil and Helen united.

But the flight of time gave him but little encouragement.

Helen perhaps was willing to accept her handsome relative for a husband, but Basil gave no sign that he desired such an alliance.

He liked Helen well enough as a friend, perhaps regarded her somewhat in the light of a sister, and this was all.

Up to within a very short time of the opening of our story he had been fancy free.

But now he could hardly say, truthfully, that his heart was his own.

A young lady from London had come to live in the neighbourhood, in a little village which lay about a mile from the Foxmeres' residence.

[MR. FOXMERE ENCOUNTERS A SURPRISE.]

Basil had met her several times, and from being introduced had at last come to regard her with feelings akin to love.

And little wonder it was that the heart of the young man was smitten by the stranger.

Miss Blake was beautiful—there was no one who could gainsay that—and she possessed a certain charm of manner that added greatly to her attractions. Of her history or connexions she said little. Whenever these subjects were approached she managed to evade them, and those who were curious in the matter were left as much in the dark as ever.

Basil had met her several times, and from being interested could at last hardly conceal from himself that he was in love. Whether or not she was interested in a like manner in him he could not tell. In his presence she would for a time be all animation, and then suddenly become reserved, as though she had in some way forgotten herself and the rôle she meant to play.

She was a great rider, and nothing pleased her so well as to be mounted on a fleet horse, and scouring the country in all directions.

Of this Basil soon became aware. He was a good horseman himself, and mounted on his favourite steed he joined her whenever the opportunity offered.

At first she had not seemed disposed to accept his escort gracefully; but at length there was a change in her manner, and her eyes would brighten and a flush come upon her cheek at the sight of his approach.

One day he rode forth at the hour when he knew that he would be likely to meet her. Reaching a point that she would pass, he reined in his horse beneath the shadows of a group of trees and waited her coming.

Indulging in waking dreams of which she was the heroine, the moments glided by while he sat with his eyes fixed upon the road which she would come down.

Suddenly the sound of the swift footsteps of a horse smote upon his ear and woke him from his pleasant reverie. Glancing hastily in the direction whence it came, he beheld a sight that filled him with the wildest fears.

The horse upon which Miss Blake was mounted had taken fright and was bearing her towards him at a fearful rate.

Each moment he expected to see her thrown from the saddle and dashed upon the earth.

Should this happen there was not one chance in ten that she would escape with her life.

Nearer and nearer came the horse, flying over the ground at a tremendous pace.

Miss Blake kept her seat well, although he could see as she came nearer that her face was pale as death, and that she realized all the danger of her fearful situation.

In an instant his course was taken. He would attempt to save her life, even though by so doing he lost his own.

There was not an instant to lose. The affrighted horse and its fair rider were close upon him.

Wheeling his own horse into the centre of the road, he held the reins with the left hand and reached out his right for the purpose of grasping the flying horse by the bridle.

It was but the work of an instant. He made good his grasp, and the next moment was dragged from the back of his own horse, and carried along by the one that bore her he hoped to save.

It took all the strength he possessed to accomplish what he undertook, and he brought the horse to a standstill at length, and she was saved.

Not until she was safe on the hill beside him did he know that he was injured. The horse's hoof had struck him upon the knee, hurting him so badly that he found it impossible to stand.

A carriage which soon appeared took them both to Foxmere House; but before the mansion was reached Basil had found his fate.

It was several days before he was able to move about. The blow he had received proved to be more serious than he had at first imagined. He was confined to his room, but the moments did not seem so very long to him. Miss Blake came each day to see how he was getting on and to thank him again and again as her preserver.

Basil would have liked these interviews better could he have been alone with the object of his affections; but this did not chance. Helen Allison was always present, and he was sure that every word which passed between them was observed by her.

Then the thought which had often before occurred to him came back with renewed force. She perhaps loved him, or at least would like to become the mistress of Foxmere House.

The time had never been when he, as the most interested party, would have agreed to this. The thought had never been entertained by him, even before he knew Miss Blake, and now surely he would not give it a moment's consideration. The latter was dearer to him than any woman he had ever known, and he determined to make her his wife.

During their ride that day to Foxmere House she

had admitted that he was dear to her, and if it were possible—as he felt sure he was—to win her he would do it.

One morning, after he had so far recovered the use of his limb as to be able to walk about with the aid of a crutch, they were seated at breakfast in the library. The conversation had turned upon his mishap, and the name of Miss Blake had been mentioned in connection with it. Helen, who presided at the table, made some allusion to her frequent visits, in a manner that Basil did not like, and he was about to reply when his father said:

"Basil, how long have you known this lady? I hardly knew who she was until she was brought here with you on the day of your mishap."

"I have known her for several weeks, father. In fact, I became acquainted with her soon after her coming into the neighbourhood," answered the young man, frankly.

"Who is she, and what do you know of her?" again demanded his father. "Is there any one here who knows who she is and her antecedents?"

"That she is a lady, every way worthy of moving in the best society, there is no doubt," said Basil, warmly. "That fact, to my knowledge, has never been questioned by any one. I know of no lady in this part of the country who is more accomplished or worthy of regard than Miss Blake."

"That is your opinion, Basil," said Helen Allison. "I think there are others who might differ with you. She seems to me trying to rise above her station. I, for one, do not care to receive strangers into my confidence until I am assured as to their standing."

"Miss Blake will not press you to do so. Should you absent yourself the next time she calls I am sure she would not regret it. I will take upon myself the task of excusing you," retorted Basil, hotly.

"No doubt this arrangement would be pleasant to you," retorted Helen.

"Basil," said his father, leaning back in his chair, "I have but one word of caution for you: let not your thoughts go so far as to dream of a union with this Miss Blake. You know well that I have hoped that you and Helen would some day become man and wife. Nay, Helen, do not leave the table," he said, as the lady attempted to rise. "You have often heard me speak of this matter before. I hope that Basil will so far regard my wishes in this respect as to become entangled in no other alliance. A Foxmere should never mate with any one below him in the social scale."

"Father," exclaimed Basil, rising from his seat with a hot flush burning upon his face, "have no fear that I will do ought to disgrace the name of Foxmere. Its honour is as dear to me as it can be to you. The lady of whom you have spoken so unjustly is in every way qualified to ornament any house in the land. That there may be no farther misunderstanding between us I state here frankly that I love Miss Blake, and if she will be my wife I shall be the happiest of men. I should have taken another time to have said this had I not been forced into it. But perhaps it is just as well."

Without waiting for the outbreak on the part of his father, as the frown upon his face betokened, Basil turned, and without another word left the room.

After Basil left the room his father fell into the most violent passion, to which a word now and then from Helen only added to the flame. His son, he declared, should never throw himself away upon one whom nobody seemed to know. His own cherished wishes in regard to his union with Helen should not be disregarded in this way. From Basil's words it seemed that they were not yet engaged, and his mind was made up that if it were in his power to prevent it they never should be.

But how was he going to prevent it?

That day he formed many plans, only to throw them aside as impossible. He knew that Basil had a will of his own, and that he had got no slight task before him to turn him aside from what he had set his heart on. Still he meant in some way to triumph if it were in his power to do so.

After revolving the question over in his mind for a couple of days he at last determined upon his course.

He would pay Miss Blake a visit, and tell her plainly that he had other views in prospect for his son than an alliance with her.

It was a desperate course, but the situation required a desperate remedy.

Therefore one day he rode down to the house where Miss Blake resided.

He was shown into an apartment and desired to wait a few moments until Miss Blake returned from her walk.

She received him very graciously, and for a few moments they chatted together on a variety of subjects foreign to the one which was uppermost in his mind.

It was much harder work to approach the subject than he had imagined it would be.

He had never seen Miss Blake when she appeared so brilliant and entertaining, and he confessed to himself that he did not wonder that Basil was captivated by the siren.

Again and again he tried to approach the subject on which he had come, but each time his courage failed him, and the half-formed words died upon his tongue.

Somehow he could not help thinking that she knew what was passing in his mind, and was enjoying his confusion.

At last, by a desperate effort, he managed to say:

"I have called, Miss Blake, to speak to you on a delicate subject; one which concerns us both, and affects all our future lives. I hardly know how to commence—"

At this juncture a gentleman stepped into the room, evidently surprised to hear that Miss Blake was not alone.

"Mr. Foxmere, this is my father," said the lady.

The visitor gave one look into the face of the new comer, and then with the utmost surprise depicted upon his face exclaimed:

"Rupert Blake, my old friend! where in the name of wonder did you drop from?"

"I came to see my daughter and you," he replied, with a smile, as he warmly pressed the hand which was held out to him.

"Your daughter? Is Miss Blake your daughter?" he asked, in surprise.

"She is. I wanted her to pay you a visit, and I gave her a letter to place in your hands, telling you who she was and that I was to follow soon; but she chose to get acquainted some other way. I should judge that she and your son have improved the time well, from the fact that within an hour past Basil has asked her of me to be his wife. Of course I could deny nothing where my daughter's happiness was at stake, and I said yes. Basil, come hither and ask for that of your father. I don't think that he will refuse it."

The young man made his appearance at this, but before he could speak his father blurted out:

"Take her, Basil. I am only too glad that matters have turned out as they have. Come, every one of you, to my house, and we will have a day of rejoicing."

And they had it; all except Helen Allison. It was not an occasion of great joy to her, for she had lost the desire of her heart—that of being the mistress of the Foxmere mansion.

A. L. M.

SCIENCE.

LIME AS A PRESERVATIVE OF WOOD.—Certain facts have been made known which show that lime is a good preserver of timber. Ships and barges used for the transport of lime last longer than others. A small coasting schooner, laden with lime, was cast ashore and sank. She was raised and set afloat once more, and remained sound for thirty years. Again, a platform of nine planks was used to mix water on during three generations; then, being no longer required, was neglected, and at length hidden by grass that grew over it. Sixty years afterwards, on clearing the ground, it was discovered sound and well preserved.

FROZEN AUSTRALIAN MEAT.—The experiment of shipping frozen meat from Australia has failed. On the arrival of the "Norfolk" at London it was ascertained that, owing to defects in the construction of the tanks which contained the meat, the waste of ice was greatly in excess of the calculations. These defects were discovered soon after leaving Melbourne, and every exertion was made by those on board to remedy them, but it was ultimately found necessary to throw the whole quantity overboard. Hence this costly experiment has determined nothing as to the possibility of sending meat in the proposed manner from Australia. The defects, it is stated, were purely mechanical, and such as can certainly be obviated.

FIBRE OF THE IXTLE PLANT.—The Ixtle fibre (*Bromelia sylvestris*) is a valuable vegetable product, which grows abundantly on the southern shores of the Gulf of Mexico and is remarkable for its lustre, strength, and flexibility, without kinking. Within the thin envelope which forms the leaf there is a perfect skein of thread of extraordinary tenacity, length, and fineness. The outer covering or cuticle can be easily removed by a chemical process and the whole fibre made available without farther expense. It is proposed to use all the refuse leaves not employed for ropes or textile fabrics for paper coated and baled like hay. The Ixtle fibre requires but little cultivation, and the leaves can be dried for a few days in the sun. It is open to question whether a fine quality of paper for banknotes cannot be made from the fibre.

COLD.—That very convenient chemical, the solution of chloride of calcium, is equal to either fortune.

Refusing to boil except at a very high temperature, it has been used extensively in the production of "tinned beef." Reduced to a temperature that would freeze almost anything else, it acts as an admirable handmaid to ammonia, and assists in freezing large quantities of Australian beef for the home market. The cattle, we are told, are killed in a frozen slaughterhouse, are kept down to a low temperature, and are shipped and preserved in that condition until the meat reaches England. How the meat is kept down to a low temperature while in the ship is a mystery not yet divulged, but it is easy to divine that a small ammonia machine on board would produce all the cold necessary, and it is also possible to conceive that the meat being once properly frozen might be packed in air-tight tanks, carefully lagged in by a non-conductor.

THE MOST POWERFUL GUN IN THE WORLD.—The new reinforced siege guns lately added to the German artillery, of 21, 28, and 30½ centimetres, rifled bore, are said to be the most powerful guns in the world. Their performances are truly remarkable. The last mentioned gun, with 120 to 130 lbs. of prismatic powder of from 1.74 to 1.76 specific gravity, fires a chilled cast iron shell of 600 to 610 lbs. weight with an initial velocity of 1,607 feet per second, which is said to have never been attained before by any rifled gun. At a distance of 1,200 paces, or 988 yards, it sends the shell clean through a 14-inch armour plate and backing. The gun is very handy and easily manoeuvred; it requires one man to handle the breech piece, two to lift up and insert the shell by means of a davit lift, two men to give it its greatest elevation of 17 deg. in 16½ seconds, and its greatest depression of 6½ deg. in 11 seconds, and two men to give it its lateral direction by means of a chain running over jacks pulleys.

TELEGRAPHING MAPS AND PLANS.—A very ingenious invention has recently been exhibited by M. Dupuy de Lome, at the French Academy of Sciences. It consists in a mode of sending a plan or topographical sketch by telegraph, without necessitating a special drawing for the purpose. Over the map already made is laid a semi-circular plate of glass, the circumference of which is graduated. At the centre is an alidade, also graduated, which carries on a slide a piece of mica marked with a blade point. The latter, by its own movement along the alidade, and also by that of the alidade itself, can be brought over every point in the glass semicircle. Just before the plate is a fixed eye piece. Looking through this, the black dot is carried successively over all the points of the plan to be reproduced and the polar co-ordinates of each noted. The numbers thus obtained are transmitted by telegraph. The receiving device is analogous to that just described, but a simple point is substituted for the mica dot, and by it the designated positions on the glass are successively marked.

WATERPROOFS.—A writer in a scientific paper says: "By the way, speaking of waterproofs, I think I can give travellers a valuable hint or two. For many years I have worn India-rubber waterproofs, but I will buy no more, for I have learned that good Scotch tweed can be made entirely impervious to rain, and, moreover, I have learned to make it so; and, for the benefit of your readers, I will give the recipe: In a bucket of soft water put half a pound of sugar of lead and half a pound of powdered alum; stir this at intervals, until it becomes clear, then pour it off into another bucket, and put the garment therein, and let it be in for twenty-four hours, and then hang it up to dry without wringing it. Two of my party—a lady and gentleman—have worn garments thus treated in the wildest storms of wind and rain, without getting wet. The rain hangs upon the cloth in globules. In short, they were really waterproof. The gentleman, a fortnight ago, walked nine miles in a storm of rain and wind such as you rarely see in the south, and, when he slipped off his overcoat, his underwear was as dry as when he put it on. This is, I think, a secret worth knowing; for cloth, if it can be made to keep out wet, is, in every way, better than what we know as waterproofs."

THE RATIONALE OF FREEZING PREPARATIONS.—Freezing mixtures produce cold by the rapid conversion of solids which they contain into fluids, thus rendering latent a portion of their sensible heat. They are composed of a mixture of various salts, which, to produce the desired effect, are dissolved in water. Numerous "freezing powders" are sold. One that is recommended is composed of: One part by weight of crude powdered sal-ammoniac, intimately mixed with two parts of pulverized saltpetre; and to this when required for use add an equal bulk of carbonate of soda. Another valuable one is composed of: Five parts of saltpetre and five of sal-ammoniac, in sixteen parts of water. Prepared freezing powders mixed with water, the vessel containing the liquid to be frozen is rapidly moved about in the solution. This method has long been known in the East. In the "Institutes of Ak-bar," a prince who reigned in India at the end of the

sixteenth century, the process is thus described: "One part of saltpetre must be thrown into two parts of water, and in this mixture a vessel of pewter or silver, closely stopped, and containing the liquid to be frozen, is whirled rapidly for a quarter of an hour." Many improved contrivances for bringing the surface of the vessel containing the liquid to be frozen into free and rapid contact with the freezing mixture are sold as "freezing" and "ice-making" machines; but their principle is the same as that laid down in the "Institute of Akbar."

DEAF AND DUMB.—Dacent estimates that in Europe alone there are 200,000 afflicted in this way. In mountainous regions, as in Switzerland and Savoy, the proportion is very great. In the Bernese Canton there is one to every 195 inhabitants, in Scotland one to 196. In Great Britain, however, the proportion is only one in 1,660; in Ireland one in 1,380. At the census in 1851 there were 12,553 deaf and dumb, 6,884 male, 5,669 female. They have increased in number during the last twenty years, the former still heading the list.

DEATH OF THE OLDEST OFFICER IN THE ROYAL MARINES.—The death is announced of the oldest officer in the Royal Marines, Captain Thomas Marshall, in his 94th year. The deceased officer entered the service September 2, 1798, became lieutenant April 1, 1804, and retired on half pay August 14, 1807. On his retirement he was appointed ordnance storekeeper at Lewisham, from which post he retired on the abolition of his office, March 22, 1820, since which time he had received a pension of 125*l.* a year.

A NATURAL SAND BLAST.—A curious instance of the attrition of glass by sand has lately been noticed. In a house near the shore on the coast of Northumberland it was noticed that in some of the windows many of the panes of glass were completely obscured, or "ground," by the action of the wind and sand blown against them. The obscuration was so complete that the effect of "ground glass" was produced. The panes presented various degrees of obscuration according to the period since which they had been inserted, some being new and clear, others partially "ground," and others totally so, by the action of the wind and sand.

LICENSING ACT ADULTERATION PROVISIONS.—Steps are about to be taken in London to put in force the adulteration provisions of the Licensing Act. That measure contains provisions which, though not so rigid as they might be, would, if enforced, be a great protection against the deleterious adulteration of drink. It is to be presumed that Colonel Henderson, in his effort to give effect to the law, is acting under the direct instructions of the Home Office. Mr. Lowe, happily, is independent of the licensed victualler interest, and does not need to adapt himself to the views of the "Trade." If, however, the publicans are not to be prosecuted with the same impartiality and rigour as the milkmen, there will be such an outcry as we have not heard for many years.

THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S MARRIAGE.—On the occasion of the marriage of his Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh with her Imperial Highness the Grand Duchess Marie Alexandrovna of Russia, the Crown Prince and Princess of Prussia, the Prince and Princess of Wales, the Duke of Cambridge, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Mrs. Tait will arrive early next January at St. Petersburg. The marriage ceremony according to the rite of the Church of England will be performed by the Archbishop of Canterbury in one of the state rooms of the Winter Palace, immediately after that solemnized according to the Greek Church in one of the chapels of the Imperial Palace. Soon after the ceremony the august pair will proceed to Tsarskoe Selo, where they will stay for a week previous to their departure for England.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF INTERESTING SKETCHES BY LANDSEER.—The late Sir Edwin Landseer, when at Ardvreikie Lodge many years ago, made five drawings on the walls with pieces of burnt stick and red brick. The subjects were the three first ideas for "Stag at Bay," "Challenge," and "Forester's Family," and two large circular subjects of "Deer." These were destroyed by the fire at Ardvreikie Lodge; but, happily, they were photographed some time ago, and the only set known to exist was for many years in the possession of Mr. Alex. Munro, the sculptor, of Edinburgh; he shortly before his death presented it to Mr. Samuel Carter, the animal-painter, who has consented to lend it to Mr. Algernon Graves for exhibition amongst the complete set of Sir Edwin's works. This set of photographs is all that remains of these curious and masterly sketches of our great painter.

CLOCKS.—In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, an electric clock has been started to move the hands of seventy different clocks scattered over the city. The motive

clock is powerful, and has a pendulum composed of hollow coils of copper wire. These swing to and fro over the poles of horse-shoe magnets, and every time they pass from one pole to the opposite a current of electricity is called up inductively in the coils, and flows up the wire, and thence to the seventy dials, giving a current of an opposite nature at each swing. Behind each dial is an astatic, permanent magnet, suspended on a pivot, and surrounded by a coil of wire, and it rotates under the electric influence from the wires. A small weight may be used to each dial if the hands are heavy, and the pivoted magnet may merely regulate the time. Of course every clock will be exactly alike, and all will run with very little attention. To prevent the pendulum of the motive clock from moving too fast by the increase in the length of the vibration of the pendulum a magnetic briding apparatus is attached.

VESEUVIUS.

ALL around is spread a magnificent prospect. Immediately below lies the Atrio, just above which may be clearly seen the three small craters which gave rise to the lava of 1858; the current itself may be traced running from them against the walls of Somma, then turning to the west, in which direction it is hidden for some short distance by the more recent flows of 1867 and 1868, and again appearing with its ropy structure south of the Salvatore ridge; shorter currents from the same craters are also seen running eastwards, farther into the Atrio. Beyond from the steep and lofty cliffs of Somma, a little to the west is the ridge of San Salvatore, a fragment of old Somma, standing up amid black lava-flows (1855 and 1868 on the north, and 1767, 1858, and 1867 on the south). Farther off lies the plain, with scattered towns and villages, surrounded by green vineyards, the beautiful bays of Naples and Bain, the islands of Ischia and Procida, the old volcanic mountains of the Phlegrean Fields; and farther off still, bounding the fertile plain and marking an old sea coast, are the higher mountains beyond Capua and the snowy Apennines. Turning from this magnificent prospect, the crater edge is gained; the sides are seen to slope steeply inwards, but the volumes of smoke constantly passing upwards hide the structure of the interior except for momentary glimpses.

Leaving the edge of this great smoking cauldron, some small holes attract attention—holes not more than a yard or so wide, but of unknown depth, up which is constantly ascending a powerful current of hot air, so that fine sand or fragments of paper thrown in are at once blown forcibly out. Passing round the edge of the crater, a view to the south is obtained; the plain on which Pompeii stood lies directly below, bounded by the mountains behind Castellamare, again forming the boundary of the old sea before mentioned. Across the blue waters of the bay the hills behind Sorrento and the island of Capri please the eye by their soft outline and delicate tint, while black lava-flows form a well-contrasted foreground. On the south-east side another flow of the 1867 lava can be traced; while those of 1869 and 1834 run also to the south or south-east, and, far below, the red craters of 1769 are conspicuous.

Having about completed the circuit of the crater, the descent upon the south-west side is very instructive. The first part is made very rapidly, plunging up to the knees in fine black ash (which near the summit is quite hot below the surface), accumulated about and among the lava-flows of 1834, etc. In this easy manner about half the height of the mountain is descended in a very short time. The ash is for the most part very fine, and on examination is found to contain many separate crystals of leucite and augite. The several little red craters of 1794 are now reached; small model craters, at present very shallow, all close together, and one of them double—the birthplace of the lava-stream which destroyed Torre del Greco and ran far out into the sea. Just above these might be observed the sudden termination of a much more recent stream, presenting the appearance of a low line of steep cliff, and far below, only just above Torre del Greco, may be noticed the eleven little craters opened out along a straight line in 1861, and which again threatened the town with destruction. Soon after leaving the craters of 1794 the region of vineyards is once more gained, not before passing, however, signs of their former higher extension, in the shape of ruined hills enveloped in lava yet not overthrown. Sometimes a wall of lava may be seen approaching within a foot or so of a hut, which it may partly surround yet not overthrow. It seems that such an elastic resisting cushion of hot air is entrapped between the hut walls and the lava so as to resist the progress of the latter for some time, though finally it usually curls over the summit of the dwelling and envelopes all.

As regards the character of the Vesuvian products, both lava and ashes, a good deal of variety is exhibited. There are the trachytic tuffs of earlier eruptions associated with leucitic lavas or greystones; there are basalts of modern eruptions, crystals of augite in a dark matrix; and there are modern leucitic lavas. So that we have the three classes of volcanic rocks represented. 1st. Trachytic, essentially felspathic. 2nd. Basaltic (Doleritic), mixture of felspar and augite, the latter predominating; the augite is often crystallized out in a compact base, formed of mingled felspathic and augitic matter. 3rd. Greystones, an intermediate class formed of felspar (or one of its varieties) and augite; in the greystones of Vesuvius leucite takes the place of felspar, and is frequently crystallized out in a dark augitic base.

FACETIÆ.

Mr. HAWKINS has spoken to Dr. Kenealy. He said "Very likely." He is now on the other "side of the grave," viz., the ridiculous.—*Hornet*.

The visit of the Emperor William to the Emperor Joseph has proven that all Germans are Germans. This is important.—*Hornet*.

Two acquaintances recently met, when the following took place:—"Are you Bonapartist or Fusionist?" "No, sir, I am a pupil of the Champs Elysées circus."

"Is it a sin, mon père," said a belle to her confessor, "to listen to men who say I am handsome?" "Certainly, mon enfant," replied the abbe; "you ought never to encourage untruth."

The dying words of a Delaware woman were: "Henry, if you marry again, remember that it only takes a cupful of sugar to sweeten a quart of gooseberries."

AN American literary man philosophically writes that "we laugh at sheep because when one of them leads the way the rest follow, however ridiculous it may be; and I suppose the sheep laugh when they see us do the very same thing."

CANDID!

Host (smacking his lips): "Now, what do you say to that glass of sherry—neously." *Guest*: "My dear fellow, where did you get this abominable Marsala?"—*Punch*.

A GENTLEMAN has recently fallen out with his landlady and assaulted her, for which he was fined two-and-sixpence. We know many persons who would not mind assailing their landladies at the same price.—*Figaro*.

A DIAMOND SHOW.—Mrs. Grundy says that if you wish to see a fine display of diamonds upon the human form you must secure an introduction to the ugliest woman to be found at a fashionable watering-place.

M. PRUDHOMME, in the decline of life, was talking with his nephew, to whom he related stories of his youth. "But, uncle," suddenly exclaimed the young man, "what struck you most during your life?" "My dear boy, it was your aunt!"

EQUALITY.

Customer: "Aw—I wish to be measured—'couple 'pair o' boots.'" [Removes one.]

Tradesman: "Well, sir, fact is, I'm just going in to my luncheon. If you'd call in about half an hour—"—*Punch*. [Tableau!]

WEDGE-ITATION.

S22 doubts whether the Conductor has room for substantial female, but is relieved when he hears 107: "All right, sir, we know her, she's what we call's our wedge—when she sits down she puts other people into their places!"—*Fun*.

NATURAL DEPUCTION.

Reflective Artisan: "What rate should you think we're goin', Bill?"

More Reflective Artisan: "At the 'Death Rate' I should think, by the a'most certainty o' accident."—*Fun*.

MIDGES.—In the fashionable watering-place of Torquay, Devon, the following remarkable sign may be seen:—"T. Chapman, licensed to let midges." In going along the street the cabman will say: "Do you want a midge?"—"Do you want a fly?" Of course, as every one knows, a midge is a small fly. The Torquay midge is licensed to carry two or at most three passengers, while the fly carries five.

A LINGERING DEATH.

Fitz Jones (referring to his Indian experience): "Oh, yes, we have, or used to have, some terrible affairs out there—aw."

Katy: "Oh! yes?"

Fitz Jones: "Pore servant of mine got killed there, literally eaten up by a tiger—and the pore fellow died twenty-four hours afterwards." (And Fitz Jones still wonders why Katy laughed.)—*Fun*.

ORGAN GRINDERS.—Says a nervous man—Whoever heard of one of them dying in a smallpox hospital, or of meningitis, or catching typhoid fever, or of king's evil or any other evil that attacks de-

cent folks? Whoever heard of one of them being lost at sea, or smashed up by a railway collision, or falling from a scaffold, or getting drowned while on a fishing excursion, or being killed by an explosion of kerosene or glycerine, or shooting three fingers off with a rifle, or being kicked to death by a musket? All these accidents are constantly occurring and killing somebody, but no organ grinder is of the number. At least we never heard of any.

RULES OF LIFE.—A gentleman asked the veteran actor Charles Mathews how he had managed to preserve his youthful spirits and vigour so well. "Well," said the comedian, "I've lived a pretty free life, but I always made it a rule to have eight hours' sleep out of the twenty-four. No matter where I was, or what the temptation, I would have my sleep. And then I always eat four good sound meals a day." "But are you not a great smoker?" "Well, no; not very much of a smoker. I begin every morning, it is true, but then I leave off at night."

FRANTIC INTELLIGENCE.

A telegram came from Penang the other day, saying: It is rumoured that the Acheens are burning their pepper plantations.

Can it be credited that the Acheens are such insane barbarians as to cut off their noses to spite their faces? How absurd, too, the idea of their burning their pepper plantations, as if it were possible they could think their pepper was not hot enough already!—*Punch*.

NEWSPAPER READERS.

Uncle Ned first finds a funny thing, then laughs with a will. Aunt Sue turns to the marriages, births and deaths.

The labourer looks only at the "wants," hoping to find a better opening in his business.

Miss Lizzie seeks out the new advertisements to ascertain the newest importations in bonnets and kids.

Mr. Pleasure Seeker turns to the amusement column, and decides which entertainment will afford him the greatest amusement.

Miss Prim drops a tear—first over the marriages, then over the deaths, for, says she, "one is as bad as the other."

Mr. Politician commences with the editorial, then scans the telegraph, ending his perusal with the speeches quoted.

Mrs. Prattlemore looks to see if there is any mention of her last night's sociable, or if her little "poem" is published.

Mr. Professor slowly examines the editorial, its rhetoric, syntax and logic, then glances at the correspondence, finally returns to the Latin and quickly forgets what he has read.

Mr. Marvellous looks for the accidents, murders, inquests and deaths, reads the court record, and ends with the stories in search of something sensational.

But why extend the list? Each individual reads for himself, and if each does not find a column or more to his particular taste the paper is insipid, the editor lazy and deserving of censure.

STATISTICS.

AREAS AND THE CROPS.—The decreased area of wheat in the United Kingdom amounts to 165,424 acres, the aggregate area being 3,661,722 acres, and the probable yield, 23 bushels of 60 lb. weight per acre, 10,500,000 gr. The total decrease of the areas of wheat, barley, and oats is, in Great Britain, 118,480 acres, and in Ireland 106,806 acres—together 278,786 acres. Potatoes have decreased 88,589 acres, which, added to the decrease of 49,359 acres in Great Britain, makes a total decrease of 137,984 acres, and leaves a total area under potatoes in Great Britain of 514,693 acres, and in Ireland of 903,213 acres—together 1,417,906 acres and a product, at five tons an acre, of 7,089,530 tons.

The success of the Faroe and Iceland codfishing has this year been very remarkable. Two of the vessels arrived at the Orkneys had 8,000 fish each, two had 9,000, four had 10,000, two had 11,000, one had 14,000, and another had 19,000. The heaviest fished vessel had no fewer than 150,000. Another not fewer than 280,000 fish all of large size and superb quality, have been brought to Orkney.

A VALUABLE UMBRELLA.—Sixty-two thousand pounds sounds like a fabulous amount for the value of an umbrella in these days of cheap silk and cotton; but the new Blue Book on India tells us of the presentation of one, estimated at that enormous sum, to the great Padoga, the Shwé Dagon, at Rangoon, by the King of Burmah. This building stands on three vast platforms, "on the spur of a hill, with the summit of the cone-shaped edifice 388 feet above the roadway."

DEATH OF THE KING OF SAXONY.—A telegram

from Pillnitz announces that King John I. of Saxony died early on Wednesday morning, Oct. 29. The deceased monarch was born on December 12, 1801, and had therefore nearly completed his 72nd year. He came to the throne on August 9, 1854, at the death of his brother King Frederick Augustus II. He is succeeded by the Crown Prince. His marriage with a daughter of the late Prince of Wassa is a childless one, but the prince has a brother, Prince George, who has sons.

THE NEW MUNSTER BANK.—The new Munster Bank now in course of erection in Dame Street, Dublin, at the corner of Palace Street, has revealed some of its architectural beauties, and portions of its exquisite workmanship in carving, etc. Up to within the past few days its frontage had been covered with many planks, poles, and scaffoldings, on which numerous citizens were engaged with their chisels on the ornamental work in connection with the pillars, cornices, etc. These have been partially removed, and enough is revealed to lead to the conclusion that the new Munster Bank will be one of the handsomest buildings in the city. Dublin always stood well as regards her public buildings, and when the several elaborate structures which are now in course of erection shall have been completed we shall be able to compare in this connection very favourably with any other city.

WITHERED LEAVES.

ONE breath from autumn's chilly lips,
One touch of his cold, icy hand,
And spring's sweet beauty, summer flowers,
Lie faded, withering, o'er the land.

But in these faded, withered leaves,
We may a two-fold lesson read—
The end of all our hopes and aims
In this poor life of pain and need.

Still more, these have behind them left
The choicest sweets of their best days,
The essence of their moonlit pride,
To live and shine with richer rays.

Ay, well for us, when death's cold hand
Has laid us low within the dust,
If generous acts and noble deeds
Still live in hearts we've learned to trust.

H. J. G.

GEMS.

He who gains the victory over great insults is often overpowered by the smallest; so is it with our sorrows.

When we hear that a friend has detected some fault in us we are always disposed to do him the same favour.

SOME men are kinder to the occupants of their kennels than to their families. They will treat wife and children like dogs, but not dogs themselves so.

MANY people go through the world hearing nothing and seeing nothing. For all valuable purposes their ears are as deaf as an ear of corn, and their eyes as blind as the eye of a potato.

It is easy to tell when others are flattered, but not when we ourselves are, and every man and woman will lend firm belief to the soft nothings of the very man they believe to be an arrant flatterer when others are in the case.

Resist the temptation of circulating ill reports. If you cannot speak well of another say nothing. Why should you consider his character of less value than your own? Speak of others as you would were they present; speak as a friend of him who is absent and cannot speak for himself.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

PREVENTION OF HYDROPHOBIA.—It is a great relief, after reading the numerous accounts of "frightful deaths from hydrophobia" that have lately been appearing in the daily journals, to come across a case in which the seeds of this subtle poison have for once been prevented from germinating. The following is an account of a cure in case of hydrophobia in which a little girl who was bitten badly in the cheek, leg, and arm, by a mad dog has shown no sign of the malady, two years having elapsed since the bite was inflicted. She was treated by immediately cauterizing the wound with a saturated solution of carbolic acid and keeping it constantly wet with a weaker solution of the same, while two drops of liquor ammonia fortis were given her every two hours in water. Three days afterwards the wound was cauterized a second time with nitrate of silver, and the dose of ammonia was increased to three drops. This treatment was continued some considerable time, the wounds not being allowed to

be dry a single instant. It has since healed without a scar, and as two years have elapsed without symptoms of the poison it is believed that the patient is now entirely out of danger.

PRESERVED POTATOES.—Peel the potatoes very thin, and steam them till thoroughly cooked. Then take them up and mash them. Put this mash in a loose, crumbly state in a shallow pan about an inch deep. Place in a slow oven, and as the mash dries take the pan out occasionally and chop up so as to keep it in separate bits, then, as it becomes hard by drying, roll it with a rolling-pin or a common wine bottle. It should then present a very light crystalline appearance. Great care must be taken that no browning or partial burning ensues during the process, the object being to slow dry, not in any way to char it, which would render it hard and entirely spoilt for ordinary use. To prepare for the table: Take a sufficient quantity of the above and pour enough boiling water upon it to make it reassume the state of ordinary mashed potato, then season to taste in the usual manner. If properly prepared as above there is no perceptible difference in flavour to fresh mashed potatoes.

MISCELLANEOUS.

A NEW breakwater at Aberdeen has been completed at a cost of about £80,000. It occupied three years in its construction, and is 1,050 feet long.

GENERAL GARIBALDI writes to Mr. Arthur Arnold, stating that he has not left Caprera, and adding that England by the repression of slavery at Zanzibar, has acquired a new title to universal gratitude.

OSTRICH FEATHERS.—The trade in ostrich feathers between the Cape of Good Hope and England amounts in value to 200,000*l.* a year. The birds are reared like pheasants, and their feathers are worth 50 guineas per pound.

SPECIMEN OF THE ROYAL STAG.—The Queen has presented to the Glasgow Industrial Museum a splendid specimen of the royal stag from the forests on the Balmoral domains. The stag will be placed in a prominent position in the museum.

LARGE TAKE OF COD.—We learn that on October 27th the heaviest take of codfish ever landed at Eysmouth in one day was brought in by the fishermen. The thirty-nine boats had an aggregate catch of 6,260 stone, or an average for each boat of 160 stone.

THE Board of Works for the district of St George, Hanover Square, have ordained that their collectors shall appear at the police-court on behalf of the vestry in cases where tradesmen are summoned under the Adulteration Act.

THE American papers state that Miss Bunker, a daughter of Eng, one of the Siamese twins, has been married to Mr. Haynes, a deaf mute. The bride is also deaf and dumb, and the ceremony was interpreted by means of the manual alphabet.

MEMORIAL WINDOWS.—Two new painted windows have been inserted in the Chapel Royal, Savoy, one as a memorial of the recovery of the Prince of Wales from his serious illness, and another in memory of the Rev. John Foster, formerly chaplain of the Savoy.

PRINCE MACAO.—There is at Paris, in the national printing-office, dressed as a workman in white blouse, the Prince Macao, one of the highest personages in Japan. He has been directed by his sovereign to learn the art of printing, and is doing so in every branch.

KEEPER OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY.—The post of Keeper of the Royal Academy, lately occupied by Sir Edwin Landseer, has been filled up by the appointment of Mr. Pickersgill, R.A. The post is worth 600*l.* per annum, with residence at Burlington House. Mr. Pickersgill is a nephew of the celebrated portrait painter of that name.

A NEW BOROUGH.—Her Majesty has been pleased to grant a charter of incorporation to the town of Stoke-upon-Trent. The new borough has a population of about 15,000 souls. It gives its name to the Parliamentary borough of Stoke-upon-Trent, which comprises the municipal boroughs of Hanley, Longton, and Stoke, and the non-corporate towns of Burslem, Tunstall, and Fenton.

CLARENCE HOUSE.—The present portico and entrance of Clarence House, opposite the east of the Duke of Sutherland's residence, is to be closed, and the future access to the enlarged building will be through a gateway in front of one of the new wings, and under a large and handsome portico on the south side, facing the Mall and St. James's Park.

MONSTER FISH.—Neptune a few days ago sent to the halles a sturgeon as large as two men, and weighing 350 lbs. He was escorted by a lobster measuring 3½ feet from his claws to the tip of his tail, which was carried in procession by a Madame Angot round the halles, and the sturgeon, decked with seaweed and flowers, was borne in triumph by four men.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. H.—The chorus in question occurs in the oratorio of the Messiah, as you correctly surmise. You can get the whole oratorio at a cheap rate in Novello's series.

F. M. (Victoria Park).—The poems are declined with our best thanks. They are not deficient in a certain fluency of rhythm, but they appear at least a trifle too commonplace.

L. L. G.—The world, according to Goethe, is governed by three things: Wisdom, Authority, and Appearance. Wisdom is for philosophers, authority is for the unreflecting mob, and appearance for those who worship the transient and sometimes puerile conventionalities.

ZERO.—Not amiss for an early effort, but not adequately poetical. However we hope the lady to whom they are tenderly dedicated liked them. The language of love exerts a fascination altogether its own. By the way, the expression "goes for naught" is too flat and prosaic. Try again.

JAMES S.—Carefully prick the pimples with a needle, and squeeze out the pustular contents. Any chemist will give you a suitable lotion at a trifling cost. Take lemon water freely, avoid all highly spiced food, and all alcoholic liquor (leaving it off by degrees); use as far as possible a vegetable diet, with milk and eggs—and take frequent exercise.

JANET L.—We are afraid we cannot aid you. The inquiry is purely of a local character, and it seems from your statement that these solicitors have failed already. Are there no municipal records, and could not the town authorities render you any aid? They seem to be the most likely persons; unless of course they might happen to be interested parties—as by the way is quite possible.

J. S.—1. Lord John Manners belongs to the family of the Dukes of Rutland (Belvoir and Haddon being the principal seats)—see Burke or Debrett. 2. The House of Devonshire is not of high antiquity—dating from one Cavendish who was a dependent on Cardinal Wolsey. However that is in our day, rightly or wrongly, accounted a slight circumstance. And there may be breed without brains, as we often see, and also vice versa. Either is pitiable.

IRV.—1. The face will naturally burn when placed near the fire on a cold wintry day, especially when the weather is frosty. Otherwise sudden blushing may arise from constitutional timidity or from physical debility. If from timidity frequent mixing in society will prove beneficial and will in time cure it; if from debility take a good tonic, generous diet, and frequent exercise. 2. Green tea is usually held to produce nervousness. At all times it should be drunk sparingly.

URSULE.—You will find the incident about the poor girl selling her hair, etc., in "Les Misérables" by Victor Hugo. The poems of that eminent man have not yet appeared in an English version; possibly because it would require a poet to translate them, and a poet, as a rule, can do good original work apart altogether from the servility of translation. We may add that Hugo plus a French Dictionary has made the fortune of an English "original" author! But these things belong to the curiosities of literature.

HENRY S.—The Royal Marriage Act was passed in 1772 in consequence of the marriage of the Duke of Gloucester, the King's brother, with the widow of the Earl Waldegrave, and of the Duke of Cumberland with the widow of Colonel Horton and daughter of Lord Ingham. By this act none of the descendants of George III. unless of foreign birth can marry under 25 without the consent of the king; and at and after that age the consent of parliament is necessary to render the marriage valid. The marriage of the Duke of Sussex with the Lady Augusta Murray, solemnized in 1793, was pronounced illegal, and the claims of their son, Sir Augustus d'Eade, declared invalid by the House of Lords, 9th July, 1844. This inhuman piece of legislation is still in full force.

PETER B.—You ask us concerning early rising. The Rev. John Wesley, a man of wonderful sagacity as well as of goodness and education, used to say that eight hours' rest ought to suffice for a man and nine hours' for a woman; presuming of course the normal condition of average health in either case. Ill health or else laziness, which is equally an evil, induces silly people to doze away their time. Invalids may require some extra rest; but, as a rule, undue repose is most debilitating. Retire to rest early—always before twelve—if by ten so much the better. Our healthiest men, the agriculturists, frequently in the counties are in bed by nine—and these are the men who live to be eighty or ninety. An hour's rest before midnight is worth two afterwards. If, how-

ever, you rise early take some slight refreshment at once; early walks without such refreshment are a mistake, and to delicate people may work some serious injury. The extremely luxurious habits of the rich in regard to late rising are most pernicious, and many low in the social scale are silly enough to try and follow the dangerous example. Late hours are ruinous, and almost as pernicious as late rising. Early to bed, etc., and the old adage is quite right.

FRANK.—Marshal MacMahon, marshal and senator, was born at Sully in July, 1808. He derives his descent from an Irish family who risked and lost all for the last of the Stuart kings. The MacMahons, carrying their national traditions, ancestral pride, and historic name to France, mingled their blood by marriage with the old nobility of their adopted country. This member of the family entered the military service of France in 1825, at the school of St. Cyr; was sent to the Algerian wars in 1830, while acting as aide-de-camp to General Achard, took part in the expedition to Antwerp in 1832; attained to the rank of captain in 1833; and, after holding the post of aide-de-camp to several African generals, and taking part in the assault of Constantine, was nominated Major of Foot Chasseurs in 1840, Lieutenant-Colonel of the Foreign Legion in 1842, Colonel of the 41st of the Line in 1845, and General of Brigade in 1848. When, in 1855, General Canrobert left the Crimea, General MacMahon, then in France, was selected by Louis Napoleon to succeed him in the command of a division; and when the chiefs of the allied armies resolved on assaulting Sebastopol, Sept. 8, they assigned to General MacMahon the perilous post of carrying the works of the Malakoff. For his brilliant success on this occasion he was made Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour; and in 1856 was nominated a Knight Grand Cross of the Bath. General MacMahon, who took a conspicuous part in the Italian campaign of 1859, received the baton of a Marshal, and was created Duke of Magenta, in commemoration of that victory. He represented France at the coronation of William III. of Prussia (now the Emperor of the German people) in November, 1861; was nominated to the command of the third corps d'armes Oct. 14, 1862, and was nominated Governor-General of Algeria by decree Sept. 1, 1864. As Commander in Chief the destinies of France now lie, humanly speaking, within his hands.

GOOD ADVICE FOR THE YOUNG.

Don't ever go hunting for pleasures—
They cannot be found thus, I know;
Nor fall a digging for treasures,
Unless with the spade and the hoe!

The bee has to work for the honey,
The drone has no right to the food,
And he who has not earned his money
Will get of his money no good.

The ant builds her house with her labour,
The squirrel looks out for his mast,
And he who depends on his neighbour
Will never have friends, first or last.

In short, 'tis no better than thieving—
Though thief is a harsh name to call—
Good things to be always receiving,
And never to give back at all.

Know this too, before you are older,
And all the fresh morning is gone—
Who puts to the world's wheel a shoulder
Is he that will move the world on!

Don't weary out will with delaying,
And when you're crowded don't stop;
Believe me there's truth in the saying,
There always is room at the top.

To conscience be true, and to man true—
Keep faith, hope and love in your breast,
And when you have done all you can do,
Why, then you may trust for the rest.

A. C.

MARY F. twenty-three, affectionate, domesticated, and good tempered, desires to correspond with a steady young about twenty-five, and fond of home.

EMMA, twenty, fair, gray eyes, brown hair, pretty, and a servant. Respondent must be a mechanic, and fond of home and children.

THOMAS, twenty-eight, tall, and in a good position, would like to make the acquaintance of a young lady from seventeen to twenty-five.

LORELY HARRY, tall, fair, considered handsome, and in a good position, desires to correspond with a tall, dark, handsome young lady about nineteen.

STELLA, eighteen, dark complexion, and thoroughly domesticated, desires to correspond with a tall, dark gentleman.

MEDICUS, twenty-six, 5ft. 10in., and dark complexion, Respondent must be tall, fair, stout, and thoroughly domesticated.

TORRY, eighteen, a brunette, accomplished, and thoroughly domesticated. Respondent must be tall and dark; an officer preferred.

HARRIET L. medium height, dark hair, and hazel eyes, Respondent must be a steady young working man about twenty.

MARY TOMMART STAYNALL, 5ft. 6in., dark complexion, and blue eyes, desires to correspond with a young lady not over twenty, loving, and domesticated; a domestic servant preferred.

EMMA AND SARAH. "Emma" twenty-four, tall, and of dark complexion; "Sarah" twenty, medium height, and dark complexion. Respondents must be two young men; mechanics preferred.

HARRY B. twenty-three, 5ft. 4in., dark, handsome, and a tradesman, wishes to correspond with an accomplished young lady of good figure, pretty, with dark-blue eyes, and fair complexion.

EDGAR, twenty-five, respectfully connected, steady and affectionate, desires to correspond with a young lady, twenty-one, good tempered, of a loving disposition, and domesticated.

L. G. F. twenty-three, 5ft. 7in., fair complexion, good looking, well educated, and of a loving disposition. Respondent must be dark, pretty, a good figure, and possess

a small fortune or good income; a domestic servant or lady's maid preferred.

MARIA C. twenty, dark, medium height, of a loving disposition, and a domestic servant. Respondent must be about her own age, tall, affectionate, good looking, and dark; an engineer preferred.

EAST INDIES, twenty-five, a sailor in the merchant service, 5ft. 4in., of an affectionate disposition, and a Good Templar. Respondent must be about twenty-two, loving, and likely to make a good sailor's wife.

MAIN BRACE, a seaman in the Royal Navy, dark hair, hazel eyes, considered good looking, fond of home, and of a loving disposition. Respondent must be eighteen, and of a loving disposition; a lady's maid preferred.

MAIN TACE, in the Royal Marines, 5ft. 7in., brown hair, hazel eyes, and considered good looking, desires to correspond with a young lady; a domestic servant preferred.

KATE A. eighteen, medium height, brown hair and eyes, and domesticated, desires to correspond with a tall, dark gentleman about her own age; a clerk preferred.

OFFICER'S GIRL, a seaman in the Royal Navy, 5ft. 8in., twenty-two, desires to correspond with a young lady medium height, good looking, fond of dancing, and not under fifteen nor over twenty-one.

F. J. T. twenty-two, 5ft. 6in., dark complexion, light hair, brown eyes, considered handsome, and Good Templar, desires to correspond with a young lady about twenty, well educated, loving, domesticated, and a Good Templar; a resident in or near Bristol preferred.

ALBERT X. G. twenty-eight, 5ft. 5in., a grocer about taking a business, dark, good tempered, fond of home and music, being also an organist, desires to correspond with a young lady about twenty-two (or with a young widow possessing a little money at command).

EMILY E. twenty-four, fair, medium height, of a loving disposition, and a domestic servant, desires to correspond with a young man about the same age or younger, affectionate, tall, good looking, and dark; an engineer preferred.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

WALTER is responded to by—"Lucy G.," who thinks she is all that he requires.

POLLY by—"Richard," who thinks he is all that she requires.

SORRY by—"M. T.," a professional man in good practice, handsome, and with a small income.

MILLY by—"Percy F.," dark, of moderate position, and musical.

ALFRED by—"Carrie," who thinks she is all that he requires.

MARIE by—"G. M.," twenty-three, dark, and thinks he is all that she requires.

GODFREY by—"Tilly," who thinks she is all that he requires.

H. H. by—"Bright Eyes," twenty-six, medium height, good looking, and thoroughly domesticated.

ANNIE by—"Nonsense," who thinks he is all that she requires.

W. S. by—"Susannah," tall, dark, considered good looking, and a domestic servant.

MARIA by—"Jack," a seaman in the Royal Navy, who thinks he is all that she requires.

FANNY by—"A Newcastle Tradesman," thirty-five, a widower, and thinks he is all that she requires.

TED B. by—"Lizzie S. E.," twenty, tall, loving, and domesticated.

KATE B. by—"Well-beloved," 5ft. 7in., dark, fond of music and home, and excellent prospects of advancement.

JOHN HARRY by—"Golden-Haired Clara," twenty-two, tall, fair, of a loving disposition, and thoroughly domesticated.

MERRY BOB by—"Jennie," eighteen, fair, brown hair and eyes, medium height, of a loving disposition, domesticated, and in receipt of a good income.

THUNDERER by—"Amanda," eighteen, 5ft. 3in., dark hair and eyes, a domestic servant, and thinks she is all that he requires.

DICK A. by—"Annie H.," twenty-one, tall, brown hair, dark-blue eyes, considered good looking, of a loving disposition, and thoroughly domesticated.

GILBERT by—"Loving Louie," twenty-two, well educated, considered pretty, and thinks she would make him a good wife.

ELLEN E. by—"William W.," twenty-four, fair complexion, dark-blue eyes, good looking, and is a steady and industrious workman.

BLANCHE by—"Harry," twenty-one, tall, dark, well connected, possessing nearly 150l. per annum, and fond of home and music; and by—"Rhys," twenty-two, dark, good looking, fond of home and music, and is in receipt of 350l. per annum.

ALL THE BACK NUMBERS, PARTS AND VOLUMES of the "LONDON READER" are in print and may be had at the Office, 334, Strand; or will be sent to any part of the United Kingdom Postfree for Three-halfpence, Eightpence, and Five Shillings and Eightpence each.

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